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## Organizing the self and the world

### Michael Tanner

ALEXANDER NEHAMAS  
*Nietzsche: Life as Literature*  
261pp. Harvard University Press. £14.95.  
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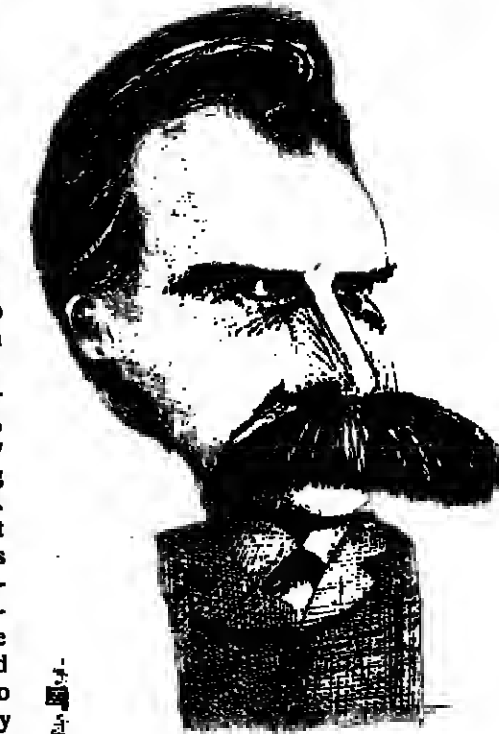
This is the best and most important book on Nietzsche in English. Alexander Nehamas argues at a level of sophistication and provides a density of content which are very rare in this field. He has strong views as to how one should, or perhaps more fairly can, approach Nietzsche, and he works them out with a disinterestedness which may mean that, if his lead is followed, we can move away altogether from "Der Fall Nietzsche". We can move away not in the sense that Nietzsche will cease to remain a permanently controversial figure, but rather in the sense that those who write about him will no longer have a lurking feeling that they still have to establish that he is worthy of serious and rigorous exposition and critique, and that it is not true that there is, after all, a great deal of smoke and not very much fire.

It is the destiny – or doom – of great thinkers and moralists to be endlessly interpreted, however seemingly simple their message. Christ tried to make himself as unambiguously clear as possible, but one of his less imposing achievements has been to keep more scholars busy in explaining what he meant, largely in terms which only other scholars could understand, than any other person has ever done. Nietzsche's views are probably a good deal more complicated than Christ's, but he intended them to be just as "existential", indeed one of the things he learned from studying the history of Christianity was how a great teacher's views on life could be perverted, misrepresented and used by purveyors of many sharply conflicting codes. The most remarkable part of *The Antichrist* is devoted to a portrait of Christ himself which, given the title and the general drift of the book, is amazingly generous. Feelings of sympathy for this grossly misunderstood figure of pure inwardness lead Nietzsche to something close to identification with the alleged object of his attack: "There has only been one Christian, and he died on the cross" is Nietzsche's tersest expression of rage against what Christianity has done to its founder. Contemplating the history of Nietzsche's own reception in the century since anyone began to take notice of him leads one to comparable feelings. More self-conscious than Christ,

Nietzsche foresaw what was likely to happen. "I have a terrible fear that one day someone will call me holy", he wrote; and sure enough at his funeral his closest friend, Peter Gast, did exactly that.

But whatever insults one feels like addressing to the first fifty years of Nietzsche-appreciators, "academicism" or "scholarshipism" isn't among them. Many of the pseudo-religions and world-destructive political creeds of the twentieth century have ransacked Nietzsche, sometimes with awful plausibility, to provide them with intellectual ancestry. In such a climate, where Nietzsche's unspeakable sister presided over a luncheon-party in Weimar given for Wilhelm Wagner, when the two vicious ladies could revoke the regrettable feud between their long-dead brother and father-in-law respectively, it was necessary that someone should come along and assert emphatically, with all the impressive learning that the research facilities of a modern university make possible, that all hitherto accepted views of Nietzsche were as remote from what he actually thought and wrote as the twentieth-century Churches are from Christ. Unfortunately that person was Walter Kaufmann, admirable as a translator but pernicious as a commentator. In his book *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, first published in 1950, and undergoing expostions in three subsequent editions, he peddled a view of Nietzsche which certainly eliminated any possibility of offence being given to anyone of liberal humanist outlook. Kaufmann was a professor of Philosophy at Princeton, and his depiction of Nietzsche is that of a stimulating colleague, given to over-enthusiastic but essentially well-intentioned formulations of the views that any agreeable member of the department might be expected to hold about morality, race, freedom and so on. More than that, by dint of extraordinary industry and ambition, Kaufmann established such a hegemony that subsequent writers on Nietzsche in the Anglo-American philosophical world either took his line or were the recipients of savage reviews by him or one of his intellectual dependants. That depressing situation obtained until his death in 1980, and even now most writers on Nietzsche disagree with Kaufmann only circumspectly and after paying tribute to his inspiring work. Furthermore, Nietzsche's remark that he would like to say in ten sentences what others would say in as many volumes has been taken all too seriously, so that it looks as if we are in danger of getting a volume for each of his sentences.

Nehamas is a professor of Philosophy at Pittsburgh, and it is therefore all the more remarkable that he hasn't felt more constrained by his environment into an academicism that has been threatening to suffocate Nietzsche for the last three decades. At the same time, in the light of the importance and, in a certain way, the availability of what he has to say – the importance for living as well as for "Nietzsche studies" – it is a pity that he wasn't able to persuade himself to go yet further and sever himself more completely from his academic background. It isn't that one doesn't want accuracy and precision, even the acknow-



ledgement of intellectual debts. But Nehamas, as well as providing all of those, feels the need to compare and contrast everything he says about Nietzsche with what other writers have said, which means that there is a lot of distracting in-fighting in a book whose structure is firm but not always easy to follow or to keep hold of. What he has to say matters too much for readers to be deluged by references to, for instance, an article on Pindar's Second Pythian Ode in Volume 115 of the *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, which they perhaps won't have ready to hand or even want to check out at their

local library. The Nietzsche industry is a characteristic and especially appalling branch of contemporary professionalism in the humanities. Nehamas seems to be keen on both beating them and joining them. He should have taken courage from the most helpful writers to date – F. A. Lea, Erich Heller, and his much admired Delcuzo – and presented his interpretation without confusing all but a tiny number of specialists with his disagreements and near-convergences.

Admittedly the position is a difficult one. For Nehamas is much influenced by contemporary French literary theory, and has himself made distinguished contributions to the genre. Since it is a genre characterized by a remarkable degree of cross-reference, he may well feel, as many of his readers will not, the need to say when and why he disagrees with Derrida, and so forth, since the thesis he propounds about Nietzsche is indeed highly Gallic. But it is a pity that people with original and valuable things to say feel the need to relate them to, or to locate them within, a swarming and fashionable "discourse" which may soon be obsolete. None the less, Nehamas contrives to write in civilized prose, and without jargon.

Nehamas's fundamental idea is simple enough to be expressed accurately in a single sentence of the blurb, which is in other respects seriously inaccurate. He thinks that Nietzsche's work, at least from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* onwards, is primarily concerned to elucidate his view of the world as being closely analogous to a literary text. "Like an artwork", Nehamas writes,

the world requires reading and interpretation, "good philology", in order to be mastered, understood, and made livable. The "death of God", both as hero and as author, allows Nietzsche to deny that the world is subject to a single overarching interpretation, corresponding to God's role or intention. And his self-creation introduces the most paradoxical view yet, the fact that the readers of this text are some of its own parts, some of its own characters, who in reading it further its self-creation.

If one takes this line – a highly selective one, as Nehamas insists – a great number, perhaps all of Nietzsche's cardinal concepts, become clearer, and his application of them more plausible, than previously. For instance, his celebrated remark "There are no facts, only interpretations" loses its air of offensive paradox: we "read" the world from a particular perspective – perspectivism being a major element in Nietzsche's mature work – and can no more grasp it without preconceptions, or "as it is", than we can a literary text.

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Indeed, the notion of an uninterpreted world becomes senseless in just the way that the notion of an uninterpreted text is. Again, much ink has been spilled over the meaning of Nietzsche's repeated remark in *The Birth of Tragedy* that "only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence justified". Nehamas's claim prevents the spilling of more ink. To view the world thus is to give notice that certain questions shouldn't be raised, and that others must be pressed – the same questions that are relevant in dealing with a text, whichever those may turn out to be. Perspectivism and what Nehamas calls, a little confusingly, aestheticism, go together. And he claims that such an understanding of the basic Nietzschean view enables us to make sense of, even if not to accept, such ultimately problematic notions as that of the Will to Power and the Eternal Recurrence, as well as casting light on such gnomic injunctions as "Become who you are!" How can one become who one is, or alternatively how can one avoid it? sharp commentators have asked. For Nietzsche doesn't believe in the concept of the self, so there is no one to be, or to become; and since he doesn't believe in being, only in becoming, there is no state that could answer to being oneself. These obvious points have led many readers, understandably, into thinking that Nietzsche is an irresponsible sloganizer. But on Nehamas's account Nietzsche's notions for *Freude durch Kraft* become more intelligible, and may even be true or correct, though Nehamas is anxious to disclaim having shown the latter – but ought he not to have tried?

After a helpful summary of what lies ahead, Nehamas begins with an illuminating chapter on Nietzsche's plurality of styles, and the importance of realizing why he has so many, and of never failing to note which one he is writing in. He volubly insists on the danger of over-stressing Nietzsche's use of aphorisms at the expense of his many other modes. But when we reach the body of the book, this issue is dropped. In fact I suspect that Nehamas quotes from *The Will to Power* more often than from any of Nietzsche's published writings, and since that remarkable collection is made up of notes, jottings, headings, trial runs, etc., and wasn't intended by Nietzsche for publication, the question of its style doesn't arise. Even when Nehamas is dealing with the great published works nothing is said about how they differ, if they do, from traditional philosophical modes.

This striking divergence between the introductory insistence on style, and the subsequent ignoring of it, suggests that Nehamas hasn't organized his material as firmly as the confidence of his manner indicates. This is no marginal matter, because as Nehamas moves on, his concern with the "style" a person gives his life becomes ever more urgent, and his final claim is that Nietzsche's supreme achievement is to have created a character out of the sum total of his writings: "In engaging with his works, we are not engaging with the miserable little man who wrote them but with the philosopher who emerges through them, the magnificent character these texts constitute and manifest, the agent who, as the will to power holds, is nothing but his effects – that is, his writings." But Nehamas reaches this "exotic" conclusion through closely argued analyses of key passages and concepts conducted as they might have been for Hegel, say, or Leibniz.

Nehamas claims that Nietzsche's overriding concern is with the organization of the self – in the sense of that term which is acceptable – and the self's organization of the world. What is organized doesn't matter – just as, in a painting, an individual blob of paint has point only in the context of the whole work (a dispiriting view, of course). As Nietzsche puts it brilliantly:

One is an artist at the cost of regarding that which all non-artists call "form" as content, as "the matter itself". To be sure, then one belongs to a topsy-turvy world, for henceforth content becomes something, merely formal – our life included.

As Nehamas sees, this raises a crucial question: the particular elements of a work of art are – though this is a controversial matter, since it is often felt that there are sounds, colours, words which are inherently ugly or otherwise objectionable – aesthetically neutral. But the elements that make up a life are actions, thoughts,

intentions, etc., some of which may be felt to be unjustifiable by whatever framework they are fitted into.

To carry formalism so far with respect to a life is clearly disastrous. And I see no indication that Nietzsche ever seriously envisaged such a thing (the last quotation came from a notebook he didn't publish) – if he had done, he would hardly have been so intent on analysing, deploring, celebrating individual states of mind, actions, vice and virtues. Nehamas evidently feels uneasy on this subject, and is also confused.

It is not clear to me whether a consistently irredeemably vicious person does actually have a character. . . . In some way there is something inherently praiseworthy in having character or style that prevents extreme cases of vice from being praised even in Nietzsche's format sense.

But in which way? Merely by definition? Nehamas volunteers nothing here; when he isn't vague in this area he is questionable. Certainly if so much weight is to be put on "character" and "style" they need far more analysis than he awards them. Further down the same page he writes "Yet there are many cases in which we feel free to admire characters who are . . . dreadful people: we do so constantly in the case of literature." He goes on to instance Fagin and other "great literary villains", and says "Here we can admire without reservations or misgivings". Noting that one might object – one certainly does – that "our admiration for villains or even inconsistent characters . . . is directed not at those characters themselves but at the authors who create them", he evades the force of that, though it is central.

Nehamas's assimilation of Nietzsche's



A detail from one of Elkhoson's photographs of Yukio Mishima. It is taken from *Ba Ra Kei: Ordinal* by Rosen, a collaboration between the novelist and the photographer (105pp. Aperture, distributed by Pholdon. £35. 089 381 16960).

## Reticent and loyal

Michael Rosen

HANS-GEORG GADAMER  
*Philosophical Apprenticeship*  
Translated by Robert L. Sullivan  
198pp. MIT Press. £13.95.  
0262 070928

The dust-jacket of Hans-Georg Gadamer's autobiography is dominated by a picture of the author's face. The expression is thoughtful, even stern. Inset, however, there can be seen a small version of the photograph from which this detail has been taken. It shows Gadamer sitting at a table out of doors, with a book open in front of him and a glass – a large glass – of beer, into which substantial inroads have been made. One might see this, perhaps, as a metaphor for the point of a philosopher's biography – to take a broader angle and so to soften the impression of austerity that comes from focusing exclusively on the intellectual side of things.

But such self-revelation is not Gadamer's purpose. *De nobis ipse aliam* is the rather forbidding motto which he chooses for what is, essentially, a somewhat formal record of the intellectual milieu within which his philosophical ideas were developed.

Not that Gadamer does not have plenty of vivid (and revealing) scenes to describe: a lecture by Heidegger on skiing (skating can be learned only on the land and for the land); Edmund Husserl, saying, as he emerges from a seminar, in which he himself has just held an uninterrupted monologue for the entire period: "Today for once we had a really interesting discussion!" Heidegger again, lecturing his

dinner guests on the mission of philosophy while Frau Heidegger becomes increasingly annoyed as the meal goes cold; or the students in Frankfurt, parodying their teacher Theodor Adorno's insistence that musical texts should be treated "like books", with a concert performed by a completely silent choir. Nor is Gadamer averse to stories which go against himself. He recalls, for example, that his friends (anticipating Daniel Dennett's *Philosophical Lexicon* by about half a century) defined the "gad" as "the basic unit for the scientific measurement of unnecessary complexity".

Yet his most personal experiences – love (we learn only that Gadamer has been married twice and that he has daughters from both marriages) and suffering (the fact that he contracted polio in the 1920s is mentioned without comment) – are touched on only in passing. Perhaps one should not expect otherwise from someone who, for most of his life, has been *ein deutscher Beamter*, a state functionary, for whom "personal reticence" is still an officially prescribed obligation. But it does mean that Gadamer's personality emerges here only indirectly – most clearly from the tolerance and generosity which he shows towards his subjects.

As far as his intellectual life is concerned, it is Heidegger who is far and away its dominating figure. Unlike his friend Karl Löwith, or Heidegger's other former teaching assistant, Herbert Marcuse, Gadamer never felt the need to break with Heidegger, and he still considers his own work – some would say only his later work – as fundamentally an extension of Heidegger's ideas. Even more revealing than what he has to say directly about Heidegger, however, is his description of the circum-

stances under which Heidegger came to make such an overwhelming impression on him. When Gadamer began his studies, after the First World War, the effects of the collapse of the Imperial order were everywhere apparent. His own experiences in provincial Marburg were, to be sure, worlds away from the conventional image of the "Walmer years", yet the details of Marburg life that he mentions – the impact of expressionist poetry, Otto Dix's portrait of Max Scheler, a chance meeting with Stefan George ("I could not look him straight in the eye, blinded as I was by the immortality of his figure") – are enough to show that here, too, a sense of profound spiritual crisis was making itself felt.

Nevertheless the traditional standards of scholarship were still very much intact, fiercely maintained by an older generation of Marburg professors, and it was an important part of Heidegger's appeal that he was able to match their formidable industry and erudition. But it was Heidegger's vision of a synthesis of the Protestant tradition with the inheritance of the Greeks which was to prove so potent to a young man, steeped in the classics at this, the oldest of German Protestant universities. There for nothing did Gadamer spend every Thursday evening, week in week out for many years, reading Greek texts at Rudolf Mann's apartment. Whatever disillusionment Gadamer may have felt later at Heidegger's behaviour during the Third Reich (he is too much the loyal pupil to allow anything critical on the subject to emerge here), it is clear that for him, this vision remains as valid today as it was more than sixty years ago. It has given Gadamer's work – and his life – a rare continuity and integrity.

## Freedom by exploitation

Alan Ryan

ROBERT L. HEILBRONER  
*The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*  
225pp. Norton. £11.95.  
0393 022277

Like neutros and neutriots, capitalism existed for a long time before it was discovered and given a name. But, whereas physicists have rather speedily agreed on the empirical reality of the entities in question and on the explanatory usefulness of the theories which posit them, neither sociologists nor economists have ever attained a similar unanimity about the explanatory indispensability of the concept of "capitalism". Smith, Ricardo and Mill wrote their economic treatises without ever mentioning "capitalism"; French sociologists from Saint-Simon to Raymond Aron found the idea of "industrial society" more to their purposes, and if Max Weber was ready to write of "the spirit of capitalism", the fact that he was so ready to define capitalism in psychological terms sets his understanding of it quite at odds with that of Marx.

In this engaging, good-natured and relaxed defence of one side of that debate, Robert Heilbroner sets out to persuade us that if societies such as our own, the United States, contemporary France and so on are not just capitalist, nevertheless they are centrally and vitally capitalist. Centrally, because their capitalist features dictate the most important events which occur within them, and vitally, because it is the capitalist dynamics of the economic system that pushes such societies in a particular historical direction. If this suggests that what we are offered is Marxism worn with a difference, that is indeed what Heilbroner himself says. Nor could anyone quarrel with his observation that the more the reader knows about Marx, the less Marxist the book will appear. Heilbroner detaches himself from the

about theory of value, relaxes the connection between economic base and political superstructure, allows technology to play an almost spontaneous role in economic development, and offers us no more than the bare possibility that we can achieve a non-tyrannical socialism. But what makes *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* interesting and distinctive is what makes it at any rate *marxian*, and that is the insistence that it is worth classifying social systems in the kind of way Marx did, that it is as capitalist systems that modern, industrial, private property-based societies have a "nature" and a "logic" which yield to analysis, and that most of the features which Marx was obsessed with are indeed as important as he thought.

Heilbroner writes as something of a reformed sinner: "Twenty years ago", he writes, "I was myself so eager to avoid the difficulties of the term *capitalism* that I proposed relegating it to a kind of limbo and concentrating instead on the sharp particulars of the business system." But this empiricism won't do. There is

a kind of netherworld in whose grip the activities of business are caught. That netherworld may be called the Invisible Hand, or the laws of motion of the system, or the market mechanism. . . . In every case, however, the business world itself is seen as a more vehicle by which larger and more encompassing principles of order and movement are carried out.

We are not to take this suggestion of an Invisible Hand too literally, of course; the thought, rather, is that for any given participant in the capitalist economy what he has got to do is laid down by the system – and, in particular, that what he has got to do is what fosters the accumulation of capital. It is the nature of the whole system which gives a logic to everyone's behaviour. Heilbroner, who doubtless irritates many readers by the way he simply ignores the battles between "methodological individualism" and "holism" or "structuralism" that have plagued Marx's critics since Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), but many others will not doubt be happy to leave the philosophers to bury their dead and will follow Heilbroner in thinking that this approach is fundamentally indispensable, whatever its ontological foundations.

Thus far, Heilbroner is squarely in the Marx tradition: he stays within it in arguing that what is important about capitalism is the demands of capital accumulation. He also stays

within it in arguing that what is distinctive about capitalism as a social system is the way in which the surplus product is diverted to the owners of the means of production. That is, in the familiar way he argues that in different societies the surplus product is taken by the dominant class in a variety of different ways, by forced labour, by slave ownership, and, under capitalism, by the non-coercive (or not directly and overtly coercive) effect of the capitalists' ownership of what the workers need to work on and with if they are to stay alive. What he does not entirely see is that his view of profit as a form of exploitation is only rather feebly supported by his insistence on the connection between profit and property rights. The Beatles only secured their large incomes because they had what we can in an enlarged sense call property rights over their own performances. Was this necessarily exploitation? They had something to sell for which they could exact a high price; equally, the owners of capital equipment can no doubt exact a price for access to work, just as skilled workers can exact a price for access to their skills and so on. To show that exploitation is going on, we need a good deal more – perhaps a historical account of why those who own the means of production have no right to them, or why they are able and willing to demand an unjust price for access to them, or whatever. Merely to insist that profits are produced by the conjunction of a physical surplus and property rights in it won't do the trick. And given the intellectual sharpness with which writers such as Robert Nozick have attacked Marxian ideas about exploitation, it really is misplaced optimism to hope to get away with as little as Heilbroner produces in defence.

It may be, however, that the objection is misplaced. For perhaps Heilbroner is less concerned with the detailed demonstration that property rights under capitalism yield injustices properly described as exploitation than with the demonstration that "profit" is not, so to speak, a substance naturally accruing to capital. Perhaps what Heilbroner is most anxious to achieve is the intellectual distance that most elementary economics texts do not aim at, but which this kind of treatment does. For the question which Heilbroner's account raises more urgently than any other is whether one could envisage other forms of ownership which would be less exploitative in the traditional sense without bringing in their train other and worse evils, and the attainability of a non-repressive socialism is certainly the question on which Heilbroner expresses some very un-Marxist anxieties.

Heilbroner is by no means an unqualified admirer of liberal democracy with a capitalist face. He says, and nobody in their right minds can disagree, that private property is no guarantee of liberty and democracy – indeed, he quotes Milton Friedman's list of "economic arrangements that are fundamentally capitalist and political arrangements that are not free": Tsarist Russia, Fascist Spain and Italy, Japan between the wars, and Nazi Germany. Where capitalism and freedom coexist, there are all sorts of limits to political toleration which the

state imposes for the sake of the economic order. None the less, Heilbroner points out the one grimly unshiftable fact that must make all socialists pause:

There is one striking generalization that can be extracted from the otherwise indeterminate history of democracy. It is that political freedom in modern times . . . has only appeared in capitalist states. To put the generalization in its more powerful negative form, democratic liberties have not yet appeared, except fleetingly, in any nation that has declared itself to be fundamentally anticapitalist, which is to say within the self-styled "Marxist" socialist ambit.

Nor does he take refuge in the not entirely implausible argument that most socialist states are either hard-up, or emerging from a recently colonial past, or beset by ignorance, tribal loyalties and all the rest of it. Heilbroner insists that socialism has a real problem with freedom, and that in that socialism as practised has found no way of separating access to employment from subservience to political authority. Capitalism is by its nature politically messy; the State claims authority over everything that goes on within a given geographical area but recognizes as the price of its own survival that it must allow economic activities a large degree of autonomy. But this unprincipled accommodation means in practice that freedom is at least possible; there is a livelihood to be had independently of the favour of politicians and administrators. A man may do as he pleases with his own; if he has property of his own he may employ it as he chooses; if he has not, he may work where he can find work. No doubt, it often happens that those who are for whatever reason obnoxious to potential employers are just about as badly off as under any conceivable system; none the less, for most people most of the time there is a real freedom here, and it is not one to be found within state socialism. If socialism is to coexist with freedom, there must be a large non-state sector in order to provide the some sort of freedom. The problem is that the existence of such a sector is just what Marx's own enthusiasm for the collective control of collective resources seems unable to permit.

There is much else in *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism* to chew over and enjoy. If scholars will flinch at some of the things Heilbroner says about Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and John Locke, they are unlikely to demur at the spirit in which he treats great men and large ideas. If philosophers will wish that he had gone into greater detail about many topics – his treatment of the indeterminacy of social systems, for instance, is intriguing and maddening in about equal proportions – they won't complain of the topics he raises. Not everyone will enjoy it, of course. Devout Marxists will certainly dislike his easy way with the master's ideas; the fiercer sort of empiricist will probably dislike his musings on the "long waves" of capitalist development. Neo-conservatives will wish he had simply admitted that socialism was a libicide; their enemies on the left will wish that he had admitted that capitalist democracy was always and everywhere a sham. Just about everyone else will find Robert Heilbroner infinitely reader-friendly.

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## Assembly-line of death

## Eduardo Crawley

NICK CAISTOR (Editor)

Nunca Más: A report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People  
463pp. Faber. £14.95 (paperback, £7.95).  
0571 138330

In December 1974, when I left Argentina, political assassinations were being recorded at an average of two-and-a-half every day. After seven years of military rule, the elected government had been restored in early 1973. In the first phase of the new Peronist administration the party's over-enthusiastic youth wing, many of them fresh from urban guerrilla action against the soldiers, acted as if they had achieved revolution. The days of *dependencia*, they proclaimed, were over; ahead lay *liberación*, to be built by a new, socialist Peronism. Their more sceptical guerrilla allies in the Trotskyite Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) limited themselves to calling a tactical halt to armed action.

I soon became evident that the right wing of the Peronist movement, far from sharing in this project, was bent on recovering full control of the ruling party and of the reins of government. Open war was declared on the Left, both Peronist and non-Peronist, on the very day Juan Domingo Perón returned from eighteen years of exile: the rally organized to welcome him turned into a pitched battle, in which hundreds were killed. While Perón himself directed a purge in the upper echelons of government, ousting the figurehead President, Héctor Cámpora, and calling new elections, which placed Perón himself back in the presidency, the extreme right of his party embarked on a campaign of terror, the main tools of which were abduction, torture and murder.

Responsibility for this campaign was

claimed by the sinister Alianza Anticomunista Argentina, or Triple-A – a network of thugs, heavily staffed by former police and military personnel, which operated from within ministries and state companies. In the early days of that campaign, I recall expressing my fears about the Triple-A, over lunch, to the commander of the navy, Admiral Emilio Massera. He dismissed my worries, saying, "You don't understand the situation at all. They [the Triple-A] are doing the dirty work for us [the military]. The day we are forced to step in again, we will eliminate them together with whatever *bolches* [left-wingers] may remain."

In March 1976, the military "were forced to step in again": one of the members of the new military junta was Admiral Massera. Far from eliminating the Triple-A, what the military did was to take over their mission and their methods. "Disappearances" became a key instrument of state policy, aimed at the total annihilation of the "subversives". But where the Triple-A had tended eventually to produce their "disappeared", as mutilated corpses dumped by the roadside, the military organized a country-wide system of clandestine detention centres. There the abducted "subversives" (a wide-ranging category which included "supporters" and "lukewarm sympathizers") were routinely tortured – there, at best, kept alive for a time to assist in the logistics of the "disappearance" machine; at worst, executed in secret and either buried anonymously or dumped into lakes, reservoirs or the River Plata estuary.

Though the military rulers of Argentina did their best to keep the whole operation secret, aided by a fearful population which simply did not want to admit that it knew, the story leaked out. Many of the details were documented by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations. But it was not until after the restoration of civilian rule, in 1983, that a se-

rious, comprehensive effort was made to determine the extent of the horror. The task was entrusted by President Alfonsín to a specially appointed National Commission on Disappeared People – *Conadep*, in its Spanish language acronym. *Nunca Más* ("Never Again"), published in Argentina in 1984, is a 463-page summary of the 50,000 pages of documents compiled by *Conadep* on the fate of 8,960 proven cases of "disappearance". Even those, like myself, who thought they knew it all, will be shocked by its careful, uncompromising description of "assembly-line" torture, to borrow a phrase coined by Rodolfo Terragno, one of Argentina's leading political analysts. A favourite *Conadep* anecdote tells of a veteran typesetter fainting while he was composing the text.

*Conadep*'s efforts were directed by Ernesto Sábató, one of Argentina's best-known novelists. His participation ensured that *Nunca Más* would be anything but the typical dry, bureaucratic commission report. It is to the credit of Nick Caistor and the team of *Latin American* who produced the English language version that much of the flavour of the Spanish original is preserved.

Admiral Massera and his two fellow-members of the military junta responsible for the worst of the terror are now serving long prison terms, after having been convicted thanks to the evidence unearthed by *Conadep*. In its prologue to the volume, Sábató writes,

Great catastrophes are always instructive. The tragedy which began with the military dictatorship in March 1976, the most terrible our nation has ever suffered, will undoubtedly serve to help us understand that it is only democracy which can save a people from horror on this scale, only democracy which can keep and safeguard the essential rights of man. Only with democracy will we be certain that NEVER AGAIN will events such as these, which have made Argentina so sadly infamous throughout the world, be repeated in our nation.

end figures are in some cases provided more in support or illustrate an argument of regional scope than to give the relevant detail for all countries. In the history section, country maps are accompanied by data, but only specification of area, population, GDP per capita, capital and currency. Those maps, moreover, are minimal in the extreme. Many of the thematic maps are not entirely satisfactory, and one, supposedly showing the concentration of agricultural land, is hard even to understand. Better maps and, perhaps, a country-by-country annex providing basic data for quick and easy reference might have been helpful.

However, this encyclopedia is not meant to be a substitute for an atlas, a yearbook or statistical handbook, which remain, according to one's interest, a desirable complement to complete current reference. What it does provide is a very valuable means to help understand the issues facing Latin America and the Caribbean, to see all dimensions of this continent's past and present, and to appreciate the nature of both its enormous problems and its enormous potential.

Guido di Tella and D. C. M. Platt, the editors of *The Political Economy of Argentina, 1880–1946* (217pp. Macmillan. £30.00 333 393384), describe that country as "the outstanding example of failed development", and the papers collected in the volume provide evidence on a period which began with "Argentina" as the success story of the day and ends with "Argentina" on the brink of disaster, "on the edge of its future". The papers were first delivered at a conference held at St Antony's College, Oxford, in 1981, attended by academics and by public servants who had been involved in policy-making during the latter part of the period under discussion. The volume includes four papers discussing the situation in the years before the First World War, four on the inter-war years, and two on the problems Argentina faced during the Second World War and immediately after. In "Argentina's Economic Policies since the 1930s: A Re-evaluation", Raúl Prebisch, a leading policy-maker of the time, provides an account of what he and his colleagues hoped to achieve.

## O debt, where is thy sting?

## Christopher Johnson

DAVID A. STOCKMAN

The Triumph of Politics: The crisis in American government and how it affects the world  
440pp. Bodley Head. £12.95.  
0370 307526

DANIEL BELL and LESTER THUROW

The Deficits: How big? How long? How dangerous?  
142pp. New York University Press. \$15.  
08147 10832

There is a story about a group of people on a farm in Kansas who drive in the summer heat and dust to the dreary town of Abilene, forty miles away. Instead of enjoying a sundowner on the veranda at home. Not a single one of them wants to go to Abilene, but they reach a collective decision to drive there, for want of any preferable plan of action.

The United States Federal Budget deficit is a classic example of the Abilene paradox. The supply-side economists who hijacked the Reagan platform in 1980 wanted to cut taxes, reduce public expenditure *par passu*, and balance the Budget. They hoped to achieve the three corresponding objectives of stimulating enterprise, eliminating unproductive public sector activity, and ending inflation. They got their tax cuts through, but were unable to pay for them with public expenditure reductions. To their horror, they found that they had gone to Abilene, ending up with Budget deficits which were offensive to them in principle and apparently impossible to finance in practice.

David Stockman was the only one of the supply-side "central committee", as he calls it, to be given Cabinet office. If it does nothing else, his *The Triumph of Politics* explains how the "Reagan revolution" went off the rails because of his own inability, as Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to persuade the Republican politicians who controlled Congress to pass public expenditure reductions on the same heroic scale as the tax cuts to which they had agreed. The title of the book refers to the victory of the traditional conservative Republican Party of the pork barrel and the welfare bandwagon against himself and the other ideologues of supply-side economics. It is ironic that Stockman, who began his intellectual odyssey as a tax-cutter, has ended up as a leading advocate of tax increases.

Like the Crossman diaries, his book's value lies partly in its revelation of the inner workings of government, and partly in the self-portrait of an *enfant terrible* who typifies an important strand in the political élite. Stockman will make many enemies through what he has written. Even by Washington standards of open government, it is surely premature to reveal the confidences and mistakes of former political colleagues before the administration that one served has even left office. And as a deliberate act of political sabotage against a Republican Party in which he has lost faith, the book may backfire, since by his admission his own mistakes were among the worst.

The United Kingdom publishers should not have attempted to increase sales by adding to the dust-jacket the subtitle *The crisis in American government and how it affects the world*. There is nothing bare about such effects, and true to his Middle West farming origins, Stockman gives no sign that he particularly cares. There are, however, plenty of lessons for the rest of the world, particularly the reminder that what comes out of Congress may bear no resemblance to what goes into it, or indeed to any rational set of policies whatsoever. Stockman's biggest mistake was not to have recognized this elementary truth earlier. He tried to bully Congress into submission using the President's authority to make up for his own lack of any constituency of political support.

Stockman's knowledge of economics is as shaky as his political *savoir-faire*. He makes fun of Murray Weldenbaum, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, who when he was asked by what computer he had arrived at the high-growth, high-inflation "rosy scenario" forecast of Gross National Product needed by Stockman to justify his forecast of buoyant tax revenue in spite of the 1981 cut in tax rates, simply slapped his belly. But the unexpected

fall in inflation meant that the 1981 tax cut brought in less revenue than expected. In the outcome, nominal GNP rose by only 3 per cent in 1982, not the 13 per cent of Weldenbaum's forecast. Stockman points out that part of the shortfall was due to the monetary policy of Paul Volcker, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, which was designed to offset the inflationary effects of the deficit. He admits that the forecasting mistake was thus not Weldenbaum's fault. But should he not himself have foreseen that a looser fiscal policy as signalled by the tax cuts would lead to a tighter monetary policy, with predictable effects on GNP? As it was, the budget deficit over the five years 1982–6 will have been nearly \$1 trillion higher than that predicted by the "rosy scenario" because of lower tax revenue and higher welfare spending than forecast.

The situation was this. Stockman and the other supply-siders were intent on personal income tax cuts as an incentive. And the rise in nominal GNP had the effect of reducing the original three-stage 25 per cent cut in tax rates to effectively just over 10 per cent. But the effect of the tax cuts on business was far more dramatic. The resultant stimulus to investment, a supply-side reaction *par excellence*, was both a cause of the recovery and a justification of the deficit.

Stockman's task was to match these tax cuts on the expenditure side. The more tax revenue looked like underestimating, the greater the pressure on him to slash spending so as to balance the Budget. He shows no sign of understanding that it was a futile quest, since the resulting reduction of demand would have made the 1982 recession worse, and increased the deficit again by causing a further fall in tax revenue.

The political constraints on cutting public spending are similar on both sides of the Atlantic. There was President Reagan's commitment to a massive real increase in defence spending – 30 per cent of the whole Budget. Reagan agreed to review social security programmes, only to let his own hands and those of Stockman by pledging himself to maintain them. Moreover, nothing could be done about the rising burden of debt interest payments. This left only about 30 per cent of the Budget as a target for cuts that would need to be all the more savage because of the commitment to maintain the other 70 per cent.

Stockman says it was his policy in looking for expenditure cuts to "attack weak claims, not weak clients". However, he makes it clear that he would have cut social security given the chance, and shows no recognition that the American safety-net already has gaping holes compared with those of Western Europe. His "weak claims" all proved to have strong defenders in Congress. Finally, Stockman resorted to a form of creative accounting known as the "magic asterisk" – used to refer to cuts due to "savings to be identified" which have not yet been made and perhaps never will be. In the end, the expenditure cuts which Stockman did get through were only a quarter of the size of the tax reduction.

So the Federal deficit rose to a peak of \$195 billion, or 6 per cent of GNP, in 1983. Stockman, faced in his efforts to lower expenditure, had already in 1981 been trying to claw back some of the tax cuts to make the Budget balance. The other supply-siders regarded him as a traitor to the cause, the Trotsky of their revolution. He became the foremost proponent of tax increases as the only way of reducing the Budget deficit, and schemed to get them through Congress against the President's wishes. He condemns his former Congressional associate Phil Gramm for the 1983 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, which is meant to carry out by automatic procedure the kind of expenditure cuts which he was unable to secure by negotiation. He is not prepared to admit that the deficits, though they were not inflated any more than that visit to Abilene, did tend a part in stimulating economic recovery, because, as a supply-sider, he cannot accept the Keynesian argument for tax cuts.

For the deficit, contrary to widespread alarm, has been prevented by fiscal tinkering and buoyant revenues from getting out of hand. Foreign critics have been less speechless by events. The deficit meant high interest rates – events. The deficit meant high interest rates – events. The deficit meant high interest rates – events. It pushed the dollar to ridiculous heights – from which it has come

down. It gave the United States an unmanageable balance of payments deficit on current account – but foreigners poured capital in to finance it, helping to bring interest rates down, and gladly accepted the boost to their own economies from the expansion of American imports. The deficit is still there, but the immense problems which it created are on the way to solution. In the United Kingdom there has been a similar difficulty in cutting public expenditure, but balancing the Budget has been given priority over tax cuts and the tax burden has actually increased. Our resulting unemployment problem is at least as intractable as the American deficit.

Daniel Bell, in his Joseph I. Lubin memorial lecture, republished in *The Deficits: How big? How long? How dangerous?*, is enough of an economist to show how the worst fears about the deficit did not come true. Monetary policy was tight, on and off, even though Paul Volcker was no more prepared to put the monetarist gospel into practice than President Reagan was to implement the constitutional amendment for a balanced Budget. Bell shows how foreign savings came to the rescue and prevented the deficiency of American savings from causing the Budget deficits to crowd out private investment. He draws attention to the role of wage restraint in channelling the fiscal stimulus into real growth rather than inflation.

Professor Bell's strength is in analysing the political origins of the deficit and the constraints on its possible reduction. "Role reversal" neatly describes the way in which the Republicans, rejecting the supply-side ideology, have become the party of deficit finance, and the Democrats the party of tax increases. As Bell points out, the groups which benefit from tax cuts now outnumber the lower-income welfare customers who gain from tax increases.

Bell goes through the routine of surveying worthy ideas to reduce the deficit, but concludes with little conviction that very much either will or should be done about it. Lester Thurow, however, in his Joseph I. Lubin memorial lecture, is both gloomier about the con-

sequences of the deficit, and more enthusiastic in promoting new sources of tax revenue and expenditure reduction to deal with it. He says it has meant less investment, but, like Stockman, seems to ignore the stimulus to capital spending from the business tax cuts. If Stockman is seeking a guru for his new religion of tax increases, he could hardly do better than sit at Professor Thurow's feet.

Thurow points to the inflationary danger of the deficit, but this has been averted by the high dollar. His fear that the subsequent fall in the dollar required to rectify the balance-of-payments deficit would be inflationary has now been laid to rest by the well-timed fall in oil prices. He acknowledges that the United States deficit is only about average in relation to national income when compared with those of other industrial countries. The peculiarity of the United States is its low personal savings ratio; but higher savings would have meant lower consumption, and, hence, less of a stimulus to the rest of the world's exports.

Thurow's weakest argument is the one he deploys against the view that the United States can grow its way out of the deficit. The supply-siders' optimism about the effect of GNP growth on tax revenue, misplaced in 1981, is more plausible in 1986. Growth forecasts have been rising recently in such a way as to improve deficit projections out of all recognition. This is mainly due to the fall in oil prices, which Thurow was unlucky not to foresee. He makes out a good case for value-added tax or a more general type of expenditure tax, and for a gasoline tax. He is persuasive on the need to curb spending on defence, too (now milder well-heeled) elderly, and health care. It is a pity that the Reagan tax reform proposal came too late to be included in his discussion. Professor Thurow's proposals are less likely to be implemented than the tax reform, because they are about increasing tax revenue rather than changing its composition. "In politics", Professor Bell reminds him, "the bottom line is taxes." So Americans will grin and bear the deficit, and foreigners must like it or lump it.

## MICHAEL JOSEPH

PRIMO · LEVI  
If Not Now, When?

Translated by William Weaver

"Primo Levi is no ordinary writer... It is not often that one feels a better person through reading a book, but this novel somehow has that effect."

Chaim Berman, *The Observer*  
"There is a sense of vastness to this novel... full of humane understanding and quietly brilliant."  
Sheila MacLeod, *New Statesman* \$10.95

H · S · BHABRA  
Gestures

"The language is inventive, the characters are full of charm and the narrative voice is enriched with moments of brilliant insight... *Gestures* is engrossing, and at times enlightening."

Anthony Sattin, *Times Literary Supplement*  
"Bhabra's quite extraordinary eloquence... a remarkable performance."  
John Clute, *New Statesman* \$9.95

JAMES · BALDWIN  
Evidence Of Things Not Seen

"As prophetic as *The Fire Next Time*, as moving as *Go Tell It On The Mountain*: a biting analysis of racism and the Atlanta child-murders. "I doubt whether a better book than this will be published in the next twelve months."  
Adelele Maja-Pearce, *Tribune* \$8.95

STAN · BARSTOW  
Just You Wait And See

"A sad, happy, moving account of ordinary, significant lives suddenly, briefly illuminated, given importance, made special. A really good book."  
Susan Hill, *Good Housekeeping*  
"An enchanting story, well-told... [a] beautiful and moving novel."  
Auberon Waugh, *Daily Mail* \$9.95

E · L · DOCTOROW  
World's Fair

"E. L. Doctorow brings to an old tale a freshness, an ingenuity, and what I can only call a kind of moral beauty, of a rare distinguished kind... a moving and beautiful novel."  
Nina Bayden, *Daily Telegraph* \$9.95

GRACE · INGOLDBY  
Last Dance With You

"Densely written and skilfully arranged... Grace Ingoldby's style is sharp and ironic, but she looks at the fullness of the games people play with compassion as well as wit."  
Selma Hastings, *Daily Telegraph* \$9.95

KEITH · WATERHOUSE  
The Collected Letters of a Nobody

Including Mr Pooter's Advice to His Son

"Those who have 'The Diary of a Nobody' among their library treasures will not be able to resist Keith Waterhouse's brilliant spoof... Mr Waterhouse's sense of the ridiculous, like John Jensen's pen-and-ink illustrations, is absolutely perfect."  
Christopher Stace, *Daily Telegraph* \$9.95 Illustrated



## Airy aspirants

### Desmond King-Hele

CLIVE HART  
*The Prehistory of Flight*  
 279pp. University of California Press. £29.75.  
 0520052137

The history of ideas about the air and flight is still largely unchronicled. Clive Hart is one of the most assiduous and best-equipped explorers in this difficult area, which demands a sound knowledge of mechanics, history, aerodynamics and ancient languages, as well as zeal in combing distant archives. His latest book is scholarly and original, yet also readable and beautiful, being liberally sprinkled with fascinating diagrams and embellished with twelve plates in colour.

The book is not a systematic history of flight, but rather an anthology of examples of practical attempts at flight and the usually erroneous theories which inspired the efforts. The story is at once heroic and comic: heroic because the would-be aviators risked and often lost their lives to vindicate their beliefs; and comic when the non-flyer broke no bones but merely acted out "pride will have a fall" for the spectators.

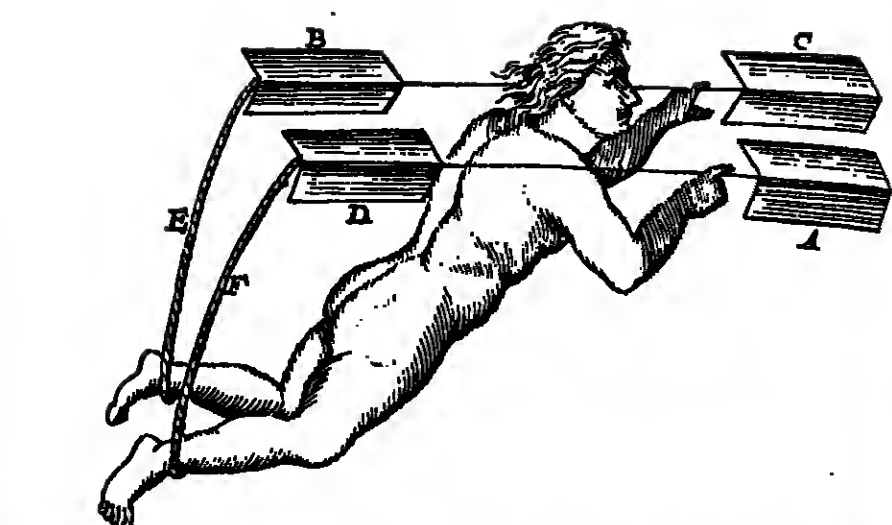
Professor Hart has scoured the museums and libraries of Europe for material: his list of manuscript sources extends to six pages and runs alphabetically from Amiens to Weimar. The list of printed sources, in Latin, French, German, Italian and sometimes even English,

fills forty pages. He has many examples previously unknown to historians of flight, with 468 notes giving their sources. Yet the scholarship scarcely intrudes into the main text, which is an alert and critical evaluation of many weird ideas and inventions in the prehistory of flight (that is, before 1783).

The first half of the book concentrates on theories, beginning with a chapter on the nature of the air. The concept of the "sphere of air" defined by Aristotle was influential for nearly 2,000 years, and in its three-tier version dominated medieval and Renaissance modelling. If the nature of the air was problematical, so were its creatures: nearly everyone seems to have regarded bats with distaste; but birds were a problem for Christians – were they akin to angels or a lower-than-human creation?

Theories of flight proliferated in Renaissance Europe. After an excellent chapter on Leonardo's well-known designs, Hart turns to the treatises by Belon (1555), Fabricius (1618) and Borelli (1680). Particularly pregnant today are Belon's detailed comparisons of the skeletons of a man and a bird: evolutionary biology could have been born here, but miscarried. In the eighteenth century flight often seemed "just around the corner", a worrying thought for the many who were convinced that we were not intended to fly.

Later chapters give entertaining accounts of practical – or allegedly practical – attempts at flight, based on five articles published in the *Aeronautical Journal*. The subjects are Burat-



Schematic representation of Besnier's oscillating wings, from *Le journal des sçavans*, December 12, 1674, and reproduced from the book reviewed here.

tini's flying dragon (1647), Swedenborg's flying saucer (1714), the ornithopters of Grimaldi, Morris and Desforges (1751–72), Melchior Bauer's cherub wagon (1764) and Carl Meerwein's ornithopter (1781). Hart's further paper, in the *Aeronautical Journal* for January 1985, on Erasmus Darwin's model goose (1777), is too recent for inclusion in the book.

All these designs had fatal flaws, but some of the inventors showed great ingenuity. Meerwein came nearest to the hang-glider, though he had no inkling of the need for stability. Desforges was the only one who tried to fly in his own machine, being launched from a tower a hundred feet high before a large crowd – and escaping with only a bruised elbow, it seems.

After the main text comes a *bonne bouche* in the form of a "Directory of heavier-than-air flying machines in Western Europe, 850 ac –

an 1783", with details of fifty-two machines or flight attempts. This chronicle of human courage and rashness is not only a source for historians but also a microcosm of life, somber and laughable by turns. The *dramatis personae* include an Italian who dropped "like a pig" and broke his neck in Paris about 1550; a luckless Polish peasant who tried and failed to fly in Moscow in 1680, and was rewarded by being severely beaten; and a prudent French peasant, who, after being fitted with Desforges's wings, "refused to make the attempt" in 1770.

If criticism is obligatory, it could be said that "Episodes in the prehistory of flight" would have been a more accurate title, and that the research, admirable though it is, rarely goes beyond Europe. These are mere quibbles. Like Hart's *The Dream of Flight*, the book is a fine contribution to the history of aeronautics.

## Discovery at a distance

### Jim Secord

MACLYN MCCARTY  
*The Transforming Principle: Discovering that genes are made of DNA*  
 252pp. Norton. \$12.25.  
 0393 019519

It is all too often still the case that fundamental changes in the historiography of modern science derive from discoveries in science rather than in history. When James D. Watson and Francis Crick announced the structure of DNA in 1953, they (unwillingly) transformed the way in which the story of the life sciences during the preceding half-century would be written. Decades of research could now be smoothed into a narrative path leading to DNA.

One of the most important and interesting steps along this retrospective path is the paper, published in 1944, which first hinted that DNA was responsible for transmitting hereditary information. The discovery came about in an unexpected way. For many years it had been denied that DNA could possess this kind of importance; proteins, with their complex composition, seemed better candidates. This view was overturned by three researchers working at the Rockefeller Institute in New York during the 1930s and early 1940s. Oswald Avery, Colin MacLeod and Maclyn McCarty were searching for what was known as the "transforming principle", responsible for changing harmless bacteria into a virulent strain. The principle proved to be DNA. McCarty has now recalled, patiently and lucidly, the painstaking research that they undertook.

During the past few years, the actual historical significance of the 1944 paper has been disputed. On the dust-jacket Sir Peter Medawar calls it "the most interesting and portentous biological experiment of the 20th century", while others have said that it was "premature". Certainly the paper had no immediately revolutionary consequences. For one thing, the authors were extremely cautious, making no public claims beyond the bacterial phenomenon they had studied. (As Avery told his biographer, "It's a lot of fun to blow bubbles – but it's wiser to prick them yourself before someone else tries to.") The results appeared in the

*Journal of Experimental Medicine*, a publication little used by geneticists and general biologists. Communication difficulties during wartime did not help matters. So while McCarty is able to show that the paper was neither ignored nor universally rejected, he cannot point to any major impact. The reason for this is simple: unlike Watson and Crick's double helix, the "transforming principle" gave experimentalists rather little to do. McCarty's own follow-up research is a case in point. He confirmed the results in a number of newly cited papers, and then moved on to study rheumatic fever. Only in retrospect does the abandonment of DNA research seem surprising. At the time, it was a natural shift for a bacteriologist.

McCarty has written an unusually quiet, calm and even self-effacing memoir – in sharp contrast with Watson's sensational revelation of scientific backstabbing, sexism and theft. A comparison of *The Transforming Principle*, Watson's *Double Helix*, and Anne Sjo's *Rosalind Franklin and DNA* would make an interesting study. In McCarty's world, scientists co-operate, welcome women into their laboratories, and share their results. Given the vexed issues of intellectual property that seem to be at stake in any DNA-related research, the distanced presentation and co-operative language of science are an entirely understandable attempt to avoid creating further controversy.

Nevertheless, McCarty does not shy away from reappportioning the distribution of reward for the discovery of the transforming principle – both in relation to what followed, and in his own part in the work. He is at some pains to put to rest Colin MacLeod's claim, published so humbly, that McCarty was a "late-comer" engaged only in "tying things down". Clearly more was involved than that, although the overall direction of the research seems to have been firmly established before McCarty arrived in 1944. MacLeod is without question presented as the central figure in the story. In any case, the book nicely displays the growing process that was involved: there was no flash of insight and reorientation of our thinking. *The Transforming Principle* is unlikely to be low the *Double Helix* onto the best-seller list of science, and as a self-portrait of a type of researcher who rarely takes to autobiography,

## Illusions of a changeless family

### Lawrence Stone

ALAN MACFARLANE  
*Marriage and Love in England: Modes of reproduction 1300–1840*  
 380pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.  
 0631 139923

This book is a gloss upon, and a modification and expansion of, a short polemical book published by Alan Macfarlane in 1978, and entitled *The Origins of English Individualism*. It takes the argument of the former as a given, and builds upon it, adding new bells and whistles that have come to the author's attention at Cambridge in the past seven years. To describe the contents of this new book, we must therefore begin by briefly recapitulating the argument of the first. It contended that all scholars of the transition from feudalism to capitalism and individualism from Marx to Weber to Tawney and on up and down, had got English history completely wrong. So far from possessing and affecting individualism and capitalism emerging in the Early Modern period, they in fact were already flourishing in the thirteenth century, having apparently been shipped over the North Sea from the Teutonic world by the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth century.

This bold, iconoclastic argument was dependent upon several assumptions. The first was a definition of individualism exclusively in terms of the relationship of the individual to the family, and to no other social unit. This ignored the question of whether a medieval peasant could even conceive the idea of individualism in the first place. Even more serious is that it totally disregarded the enormous weight of social restraints imposed by the obligations of serfdom, the collective management of the open fields, and the moral dictates of the Church. Institutions such as the manor, the open field, the village, the Church, and the State played no part whatever in Macfarlane's story: only the family.

Medievalists did not take kindly to this interpretation of their work. David Herlihy of Harvard, normally a cautious and generous scholar, was contemptuous of its methods and conclusions. J. A. Rafia of Toronto observed that "only a polemicist could pick and choose so carefully with such total disregard for the contribution of scholars of medieval England in this century", and pointed out "the author's unfamiliarity with the field, the weaknesses in his proposed methodology and the essentially circular nature of his approach". Steven D. White and Richard T. Vann of Wesleyan have carefully and at length documented the same charges of ignorance and neglect of modern work on the peasantry; misrepresentation of such works as were cited; idiosyncratic and self-serving definitions of "peasant" and "individualism"; the use of a monocausal explanatory model based on sales of property that ignores all institutions and structures of power other than the family; a neglect of mentalité and culture; and the formulation of conclusions which were consequently both implausible and unproven.

Although Macfarlane admits that "there have been a number of criticisms", he has now produced a second version of the old model, whose foundations are in some respects even shakier than the first. Although he sets out to cover the whole sweep of English history for five and a half centuries, the book is arranged not chronologically but under broad structural headings, such as "The Malthusian Marriage System", "The Value of Children", "The Purpose of Marriage" and "The Rules of Marriage". This is only possible on the assumption that nothing significant changed over this lengthy period.

To make this structuralist methodology work, Macfarlane, by his own admission, has had to make some other heroic sacrifices of historical specificity. The first is that there were no significant class, income or status variations, although he claims to ignore the top 1 per cent of the titled landed elite from knights upward. This turns out not to be true in practice, since he quotes continually from persons such as the Duchess of Newcastle, Lord Kames, Lord Burghley, the Earl of Cork, the Earl of Northumberland, Viscount Lisle, Anne Clifford Countess of Dorset and Pembroke, Sir John Gibson, Sir John Bramston,

Lady Harley, Lady Halkett, Sir Francis Osborn, Sir Henry Slingsby, Lady Fanshawe and Sir Ralph Verney – all unquestionably among the elite. He has no respect for chronology, so that his data for each argument range wildly to and fro, from the nineteenth century to the fourteenth and back again; and he makes no distinction between normative or prescriptive writings like sermons or advice books, and descriptions of actual human behaviour.

Virtually no comparisons are made with England's closest neighbours, France, Scotland or Ireland, or with her satellite, colonial North America. Instead there are constant comparisons with anthropological findings about life in the twentieth-century Third World, drawn from totally different cultures such as those to be found in Taiwan, Bangladesh, the Punjab, China, West Africa, Morocco, Java, Nigeria, Bali, New Guinea, Bengal, Turkey, Amazonia, and so on. It is clear that Macfarlane has not read the work of any modern French historian on France or American historian on colonial America, and indeed there is no evidence of his familiarity with writings in any foreign language. (Pierre Goubert is mentioned once, but there is no sign that he has been read.) Nor has Macfarlane made use of the work on the medieval peasant by modern English and American historians such as Postan, Hilton, Homans or Rafia, the first two of whom do not even figure in the bibliography. He prefers to stick to very old-fashioned secondary sources, such as Bracton as interpreted by Maitland for the peasant, and E. Westernmark (1921) and G. E. Howard (1904) for the family, or the Webbs (1927) for poor relief, or Trevelyan (1948) for social history generally. He also has a distinct preference for authors from Cambridge.

Macfarlane's basic argument runs as follows. First he repeats his 1978 hypothesis that individualism (and apparently the capitalist spirit) were fully developed by 1300 in England, and stayed that way to 1800. Next he takes the recent demographic work of the Cambridge Group, and uses their data to construct a statistical model of an unchanging family structure. He points out that we now know that from the sixteenth century – or maybe the fourteenth or the fifteenth (he is never very clear about such details) – the English household was nuclear in composition and detached from parents. In doing so, he brushes aside the valid criticisms of his household-count approach to family life. It has been plausibly argued first that census data only catch a moment in a complex life cycle; and second that household residence tells us nothing whatever about emotional relationships. Thus court records reveal continuing close ties to parents, siblings, uncles and other relatives outside the household.

Macfarlane repeats the argument of E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield that the critical variable in historical demography after 1540 was fertility not mortality, and that the determining control mechanisms for fertility were delayed marriage and low nuptiality. He then picks up Malthus's argument about preventive checks as the only solution for avoiding explosive population growth ending in famine and disease, and claims that the English followed just such a policy, as demonstrated by Wrigley and Schofield's data. For an explanation he turns to an Australian demographer of the modern Indian village, J. C. Caldwell. In his search for a cause for resistance to birth control in overcrowded modern India, Caldwell framed his argument on a simple cost-benefit hypothesis. Where the cash flow is upward, from the child to the parents, in the form of labour and earnings before the marriage and an obligation for the maintenance of parents in their old age, children mean riches and security and are therefore highly sought after; "because of my large family I am a rich man." But where the cash flow is downward, from the parents to the children, in the form of costs of rearing, the children, in the form of costs of rearing, the education, marriage and launching into the world, and where the obligation for maintenance of the parents in old age is transferred to a public authority, parents become very reluctant to produce children. In an individualistic and acquisitive but non-conformist society like medieval and early modern England this led to late marriage and lower nuptiality.

This is a powerful if simplistic model, and it seems certain that marriage has been delayed

in some Third World countries in recent years. But Macfarlane is entirely wrong to claim that Ansley Coale supports the Caldwell model. He in fact explicitly states that Western social scientists do not know "what has caused the rise in age of marriage or what would encourage further increase". The trouble with the Caldwell model is that it presumes the existence of that classic psychological ideal type, *homo economicus*, whose every action is dictated by a rational weighing of financial advantage. But this postulate ignores the web of culture – custom, social conventions, tradition, moral and religious codes and peer-pressures – which envelops and influences most of us, particularly in such intimate and important decisions as marriage. For example, the model cannot explain the rise and fall of the middle-class baby-boom in 1945–75, nor the current disintegration of the black family in America, where teenage single women are producing more and more children, and so knowingly condemning themselves and those children to a life of acute poverty and deprivation. Nor can it explain why in eighteenth-century England there was a rise of nuptiality among the poor and a decline among the rich, and a decline in the marriage age among the poor and a rise among the rich. It is also a model which cannot explain why much the same demographic and household pattern existed in northern France, where arbitrary patriarchal power in the family, backed by the full force of the law and the state, had crushed individualism, and where even Macfarlane would perhaps admit that peasants existed in large numbers. In any case, if we have learnt anything in the past few decades of historical inquiry into the family, it is surely that statistical tables offer but a dim and distorted window into the motivations underlying changes in human behaviour.

Macfarlane's ignorance of French scholarship, coupled with his neglect of religion and culture and his obsession with Malthusian economic determinism, allows him to avoid having to offer an explanation for the truly radical change of attitudes towards sexuality and marriage in the late Antique and Early Christian period, which may have had dramatic effects on population trends in Christian Europe. This revolutionary change bore no relation whatever to any cost-benefit calculus concerning children or to habits imported from the Teutonic woods. Georges Duby and J.-L. Flandrin have both seen Carolingian and post-Carolingian Europe as a region of late marriage and low fertility, with much the same nuclear household system which Macfarlane posits as so peculiarly English. But their explanation is cultural as well as economic.

The next step in the argument is to claim that the late marriage/low nuptiality pattern existed in England by the thirteenth century, and that it was a calculated product of a fully developed acquisitive ethic, operating in a mobile society guided by a concern for wealth rather than status, a high respect for the untrammeled rights of private property, and a high standard of living. Macfarlane ignores the fact that Caldwell's model was worked out for the modern Indian village, where none of these characteristics is very visible. His only evidence that they were all at work in England over many centuries is the way the age of marriage fluctuated so as to keep the population more or less in equilibrium with resources until the late eighteenth century. The argument therefore depends upon evidence of significant fluctuations in the age of marriage and in nuptiality. But the trouble is that, in their more sensitive recent calculations based on family reconstruction, Wrigley and Schofield have found that the age of marriage in England hardly changed at all between 1600 and 1749, despite the fact that this period saw first demographic growth, then decline, and then stagnation (which is the key to procreation) in the three fifty-year periods from 1600 to 1749 were 24.3, 24.3 and 23.7; not much change there! Only from 1750–99 does it fall significantly, to 22.0. Worse still is the discovery of the wide range of ages of first marriage: the difference between the two quartiles (that is, the central 50 per cent of all women) is as large as seven years or more, which casts grave doubts upon the significance of the median.

Macfarlane then embarks upon a long and interesting discussion of courting practices and

mate selection. He correctly describes the great freedom allowed to the poor to choose their own spouses, and the long courting period from six months to several years that normally preceded marriage. But the evidence is thin and the description static. A number of young researchers into family history, such as K. Waghston, R. Houlbrooke and M. Ingram (as well as myself) realized some years ago that the key to an understanding of courting and marriage lay in the rich manuscript evidence of the Church Courts. They have revealed an enormously complex and variable interaction between affective emotion and instrumental calculation, and widely varying degrees of pressure from parents and "friends". They have also shown a slow shift both in behaviour and in attitudes towards greater individualism and permissiveness in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Macfarlane does not bring anything which adds to what is already known, except an exaggerated stress on the one pole of personal emotional commitment which is not justified by the evidence. He goes so far as to declare that "the heart of the matter was the deep attachment of one man to one woman". F. G. Emmison, who examined a much wider sample of the same Essex records which Macfarlane cites for this statement, concluded that "in courtship, love was by no means always the paramount factor. Hope of gaining land or goods was more influential with many men in their choice of a bride." What is so striking in the records is the baffling complexity of human motivations involved.

Macfarlane claims that in Early Modern England companionship was the prime motivation for marriage, rather than one out of several, as stressed by all pre-Reformation and post-Reformation handbooks. This amiable trait of the English he attributes to "the old uxoriousness of the Germanic peoples". The hypothesis that love is a peculiarly English or Germanic trait leads him to dismiss the flowering in southern France in the twelfth century of a courtly love literature and ritual centring on romanticized adultery rather than marriage. In doing so he shows total ignorance of the important recent work by Duby on the subject, which emphasizes that this culture grew out of the existence at that time of a large number of impoverished bachelor knights, hanging around the courts of France and seeking their fortune and sexual fulfilment wherever they could find them. The adoption of these extreme and unsupported claims about the role of love in England at all times leads Macfarlane to ignore the real shifts when they finally occurred – namely the rise of affective individualism in the very late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in England and the rise of Romanticism in the late eighteenth – a development now documented by no fewer than six recent books about the upper propertied classes of the Eastern seaboard of America in the late eighteenth century.

From the discussion of love, Macfarlane moves on to describe the economic arrangements of marriage in England, based on the portion/jointure system, but as usual without any consideration of change over time. In the process he delivers himself of what must surely

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become a classic of statistical gibberish: "In Earts Colne between 1550 and 1800, of thirteen portions the mode (four cases) was between £40 and £50". There are two objections to this extraordinary statement. First, a sample of thirteen spread over 250 years is far too small to prove anything at all; second, between 1550 and 1800 prices in England rose six-fold according to the standard Phelps-Brown index, which makes utter nonsense of any "mode".

Since Macfarlane is covering five centuries, chronology means little to him, which is presumably what allows him to quote Blackstone (died 1780) commenting on a statute of 1824, or to describe the novelist Samuel Richardson as a "contemporary" of Ralph Josselin, when in fact they lived a century apart. He often shows ignorance of the technicalities of the law, for example not knowing the difference between a marriage licence and a special marriage licence. In his use of source he indiscriminately confuses the main-line with the atypical. For example, he never quotes the Mugglestonians, of all people, as if they represented standard seventeenth-century opinion; he uses the Puritan "Admonition to the Parliament" of 1572 as evidence of popular opinion about the "heathenish" and "popish" nature of English marriage ceremonies; and he cheerfully quotes the nineteenth-century essayist and politician William Cobbett as an authority on the fourteenth-century peasant.

The proper names and the footnotes are also riddled with errors, many minor, but some serious. One can easily forgive "Thomas Place" for Francis Place, but less readily that Queen Elizabeth's Lord Treasurer, William Cecil Lord Burghley, appears several times heavily disguised as "Robert Balfour Baron Burghleigh". This howler suggests that Macfarlane does not know much about English political history. It is a minor matter that he writes Rawlinson for Rawlins, or offers a long quotation from a speech by a judge at the Oxford assizes in 1855, which turns out on investigation to have been made in 1845 by another justice in another place. These are trivial mistakes such as we all make, and it would be false pedantry to bother about them were it not for the fact that almost every time a footnote is checked, a mistake is discovered. Most are small, but some are more serious. For example, Macfarlane alleges that there are "a number of cases" quoted by F. G. Emmison which support his claim, based as so often on the outdated work of Howard published in 1904, that in the Elizabethan period full modern divorces for adultery were granted by the Church courts. In fact, Emmison expressly stated that "there seems little doubt that all the decrees were for judicial separation only, and none for full divorce in the modern sense". One begins to wonder how many other cases of this kind would be revealed by a systematic footnote check.

Far the most serious defect of the book, however, is the basic assumption that in love and marriage nothing changed in England from the thirteenth century to the eighteenth. This involves a denial of any effect upon marriage and love of the decline of serfdom, the enclosure of the common fields, the decay of the manorial courts, the assumption by the parish of responsibility for poor relief, the growth of capitalism and a commercial economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or the development of the nation state from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. It assumes that nothing was changed by such intellectual movements as the Protestant Reformation, Puritanism, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or the later spread of deism and contract theories based on "the law of nature".

Even odder in a book about love and marriage is that major changes in this specific area are largely ignored. Little is made of the shifts between the sixteenth century and the eighteenth, from marriages by verbal contract to clandestine marriages to marriages in open church. Nothing is said about the cause of the dramatic rise in the eighteenth century of first births out of wedlock to a figure of 50 per cent. Nor is there any discussion of major changes in the laws of property inheritance, such as the Statute of Uses, the development of the strict settlement, and growing intervention by Chancery to protect married women's property, nor of the virtual collapse of the ecclesiastical

courts between 1680 and 1740 as instruments for control of morals and marriage; nor of the cause and consequence of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753.

To take but one of the many misinterpreted elements of radical change which occurred between 1300 and 1800, none is more striking than Macfarlane's comments on the development in allegedly individualistic England in the early seventeenth century of the earliest and most generous and comprehensive poor relief system in Europe. It was an institution whose ideology ran directly counter to the principle of rugged individualism, and Macfarlane's hero Malthus regarded it as "a system of all others most calculated to weaken this sentiment [the love of independence], and in the end, may eradicate it completely". But since his sole focus of attention is the individual and the family, Macfarlane regards poor relief as a system which positively reflected "economic and political individualism", since it freed the children from responsibility for old or sick or indigent relatives.

Another serious problem with the model is the argument that "the Malthusian marriage system" fitted perfectly with "... capitalism". The fact is that the most remarkably successful Malthusian marriage system operative today is in socially and economically backward and devoutly Catholic Ireland, where since the famine very late marriage and very low nuptiality has held the population stable for over 130 years. The conclusion seems to be that sometimes it fits, and sometimes it does not, which effectively wrecks Macfarlane's model.



"The Miraculous Draught of the Fishes" attributed to the Master of the Virgin among Virgins. It is taken from The Stained Glass of the Church of St Mary, Fairford Gloucestershire by Hilary Woyment (115pp. Society of Antiquaries, distributed by Thomas and Hudson, £12.0 500 99040 9).

Thus all the basic flaws in the data, assumptions, methods, breadth of vision, use of chronology and conclusions which were visible in the earlier book on the *Rise of Individualism* are here repeated, in if anything a still more reductionist and implausible form.

It should be noted that lurking behind Macfarlane's two polemical books there can be detected a hidden ideological agenda. There is a strong whiff of the isolationist Little Englander in the idea that the English have been different from (and better than) those foreigners across the Channel ever since the fifth century. The first book was described by a reviewer as a "return to the sterile nationalism of the age of Stubbs and Freeman". This new book is even more arrogantly insular than the first, despite its superficial trappings of worldwide comparisons. The second hidden ideology is neo-conservatism, involving a denial of any space for, or merit in, any kind of collective social control over individual economic behaviour. Macfarlane ends his book by presenting his readers with a characteristically stark apocalyptic option. If, as he believes, Malthus was right and Marx wrong, "there is only a choice between war, famine and disease on the one hand, and individualistic capitalism on the other". Mrs Thatcher could not have put it better. As David Herlihy said of *The Rise of Individualism*, "this is a fully-book founded on faulty method and propounding a preposterous theory".

## The books of the book

H. R. Loyn

FRANK and CAROLINE THORN

*Domesday Book*: Volume 25: Shropshire. Unnumbered pages. Chichester: Phillimore. £12 (paperback, £8). 085033 585 X. ELIZABETH M. HALLAM. *Domesday Book*: Through nine centuries. 224pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.50. 0500250979. *Domesday Heritage*. 95pp. Arrow Books. £3.95. 009 945800 4. PETER SAWYER (Editor). *Domesday Book*: A reassessment. 182pp. Edward Arnold. £25. 07131 64409. THOMAS HINDE (Editor). *The Domesday Book*: England's heritage, then and now. 351pp. Hutchinson. £14.95. 009 161890 4.

These five books give a taste of the publishing ventures which are celebrating the 900th anniversary of the production of Domesday Book, first among British public records in size and prestige, containing some two million words (as good an estimate as any) and now provoking many million more in print and in speech. The publications are fairly representative in their different ways of the interest aroused, both scholarly and general.

of *Domesday Book*, she has written an attractive and well-illustrated book which does precisely what its title promises: it gives the story of Domesday Book over the past 900 years. It is alive with information about the production and continued use of the Domesday volumes throughout the ages, in practical administration until the sixteenth century and thereafter mainly in the historical and scholarly world. No one, after reading Hallam's account, will dare again to call Domesday Book an administrative mistake. She brings out the need for copies and abstracts in the central Middle Ages, points to the recourse had to it by persons anxious to establish privilege on ancient demesne in the later Middle Ages and reminds us of the interest shown by townsmen seeking rights into the modern period. Material gathered in the preparation of *Domesday Book* remained in the local centres and took on an importance of its own. It is good to have the antiquarian details so well presented, to know where Domesday Book was at any given moment - at the Treasury, at the Exchequer, Winchester, Westminster, London, and often elsewhere - before finding more or less permanent homes at the Treasury of the Receipt, Westminster, at Tally Court, Westminster, and at the Chancery Lane. It was by no means cheap to study it. The great local historian, George Owen, from Hanllys in Pembrokeshire, published in 1569 that the book was very seldom and hard to read and that 4d a line had to be paid for a copy. 6s 8d, a considerable sum, was the going rate in the early seventeenth century for an initial fee before even an inspection could be made.

The collection edited by Peter Sawyer leads us into different Domesday territory. Accurately called "reassessments", the essays provide fascinating pointers to work in progress and to work to come on the precursors of the book (right back to Roman census and Carolingian polyptychs), the philology (almost certainly one main scribe), the ploughshare, the minister churches, the tithes, the boroughs and the computer. An important paper by H. B. Clarke on the so-called "satellites", documents notably connected with Exeter, Ely, Evesham, Bath and the great Canterbury religious houses, deepens knowledge of how Domesday Book was made, in its delicate counterpointing of old administrative territorial structures, counties and hundreds, and new baronial feudal power.

Two of the books under review are of a more popular nature but are none the worse for that. *The Domesday Book: England's Heritage*, then and now, edited by Thomas Hindle, is an attractive coffee-table book in which, after a short introduction by Elizabeth Hallam, the stories of England are surveyed on by one with reference to Domesday sites, some important, some of minor significance, that provide links between modern villages and the world of 1086. The photographs and the maps and the text help to bring out what is often an astonishing continuity in the story of the English countryside. Hallam's *Domesday Heritage* is a shorter, less expansive version of this volume, arranged alphabetically rather than county by county but using much of the same material in an abbreviated form.

The five books taken together give the right tone to the Domesday Book celebration themselves now in full swing with exhibitions at the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London (reviewed on page 532); and at the Great Hall in Winchester. Scholars' effort has been intense, and from it, as it reaches its apex in the July Conference at Winchester, will come a better appreciation of the problems by which the Domesday inquisition was held and the great record made, a firmer awareness of the impact of its production on the whole of late medieval England, and a clearer knowledge of the consequences for local government as well as for central. Of equal significance will be the stimulus given by the book to many publishers and publicists to the study of local, parochial, domestic history, bringing out through the evidence of Domesday Book the continuity of the English heritage. Popular interest has also been great and local bodies organized by the National Domesday Commission, the Historical Association, by the Medieval Society of Great Britain and many other associations multiply and fructify.

## Discussing the Abdication

Victoria Glendinning

MICHAEL BLOCH (Editor). *Wallis and Edward: Letters 1931-1937*. The intimate correspondence of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. 388pp. Weldenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95. 0297788043. OSBERT SITWELL. *Rat Week: An essay on the Abdication*. 80pp. Michael Joseph. £7.95. 07181 1859 6.

"I am so anxious for you not to abdicate", the agitated Wallis Simpson wrote to Edward VIII from her bolt-hole in France. It does "put me in the wrong light to the entire world because they will say that I could have prevented it". They did say that, and she could have prevented it by disappearing entirely and refusing to communicate with him. This book is an object lesson in what can happen when an ordinary person tries to have her cake and eat it.

The title is misleading. Correspondence between Mrs Simpson and Edward forms only a part, and his contribution consists chiefly of brief notes of love in private baby-language: How did you sleep and did you miss me? A boy has overdone the drowsy but is hurrying down to a girl... A boy loves a girl more and more and more.

The bulk of the letters are from Mrs Simpson to her Aunt Bessie in Washington, and are, like the rest, edited, selected and cut by Michael Bloch. The significance of the letters to Aunt Bessie - which are mainly about parties, clothes, money, the weather and the servant problem - is that they strongly suggest that marriage to HRH was the last thing Mrs Simpson had in mind. Bloch is anxious to redeem her reputation - inevitably, at the expense of the Prince's. What Wallis Simpson wanted was

a "swan song" before settling down into middle age with her ailing second husband Ernest. It was expensive and exhausting being the beloved of the Prince of Wales, but wildly exciting, and "I shall try and be clever enough to keep them both."

Gradually she realized the extent of the lonely Prince's infantile, egotistic dependence on her, and warned him that she did not want to "lose something ooble for a boy who may always remain Peter Pan". She saw the liaison as a fairy-tale temporary "job"; and indeed if he had not become king while their mutual passion was at its height, the affair might well have burned out. But his response to new responsibility was to retreat still further into his private idyll. She knew he was "weak", and that he needed her love, "otherwise he goes wrong". She decided to remain with him even though his advisers, and her husband, showed signs of stress. "It's not easy to please, placate and amuse two men and to fit into two such separate lives."

She failed. Ernest, who had loved her, found comfort elsewhere. The single-minded Prince set in train the events which led to the Abdication; after which Wallis, "caught in a trap", could no longer think of extricating herself. Her lover was childishly unrealistic. Having committed himself to him she took over, and her loving letters became increasingly managerial. There was some worldly wisdom in the bectic demands expressed here for recognition and status for them both. What might become of their "lonely love" and of Peter Pan, rejected and in exile? Her hard American realism is seen battering hopelessly against his mindless optimism. In the pre-Abdication pictures one sees the Wallis he fell for. In the wedding photograph, she has already the familiar furrowed mask, the sunk in black eyes.

Osbert Sitwell's essay *Rat Week*, written in old age, has, like the letters, never been published before. It includes his satirical poem "Rat Week" (about the climbers who clustered round HRH and Mrs Simpson before the Abdication, and dropped them after), which he circulated privately at the time. The poem was pirated by the magazine *Cavalade*, and the point of the essay is the successful case that Sir Osbert brought, in true Sitwellian style, against *Cavalade* for breach of copyright. The essay is notable for a eulogy of the then Duchess of York and her husband (who became George VI) in contrast with the Prince of Wales, whom Sitwell loathed. He had been "honoured with the friendship" of the blameless Yorks, and makes the most of it. This, as John Pearson writes in his introduction, is a "bizarre and partial" record, barely redeemed by some scorching turns of phrase.

Michael Bloch, in one of his hyperbolic linking passages between the letters, remarks on the "clairvoyance" of a desperate letter Mrs Simpson wrote to Edward before the Abdication, asking him to let her go. ("I am sure you and I would only create disaster together.") This suggests he has a view on how the marriage turned out. Sitwell in his essay describes a conversation with someone who visited the Windsors in 1951. What, he asked his friend, do they do in the evenings? "They sit opposite each other and discuss the Abdication." "But surely they can't do that every evening?" "Oh yes, they can."

Windsor-experts will find enough suggestive new material in these two books to keep them arguing for years. Provisionally, let the last word go to Ernest Simpson, who has had a bad press as the cuckold who milked his wife's position for its social advantages and then ditched her: And would your life ever have been the same, if you had broken it off? I mean could you have settled down to the old life and forgotten the fairyland through which you had passed? My child, I do not think so.

## Privileged chatter-up

David Pryce-Jones

JOHN CHARMLEY. *Duff Cooper: The authorized biography*. 265pp. Weldenfeld and Nicolson. £13.95. 0297788574.

It is the soundest of Tory instincts never to be a loser, and nothing much more complicated than that seems to have motivated Duff Cooper. *Old Men Forget*, his autobiography, is a record of moving on and up as though by natural processes, without openings for regret or self-doubt. People had read his books and applauded his parliamentary speeches. Resigning from the Government over the Munich agreement, he had become a symbol of resistance to Hitlerism, and been proved right from every point of view. Public office afterwards might or might not have been consequential. In this approach, ambition itself turns into a side. Hallam's *Domesday Heritage* is a shorter, less expansive version of this volume, arranged alphabetically rather than county by county but using much of the same material in an abbreviated form.

The five books taken together give the right tone to the Domesday Book celebration themselves now in full swing with exhibitions at the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London (reviewed on page 532); and at the Great Hall in Winchester. Scholars' effort has been intense, and from it, as it reaches its apex in the July Conference at Winchester, will come a better appreciation of the problems by which the Domesday inquisition was held and the great record made, a firmer awareness of the impact of its production on the whole of late medieval England, and a clearer knowledge of the consequences for local government as well as for central. Of equal significance will be the stimulus given by the book to many publishers and publicists to the study of local, parochial, domestic history, bringing out through the evidence of Domesday Book the continuity of the English heritage. Popular interest has also been great and local bodies organized by the National Domesday Commission, the Historical Association, by the Medieval Society of Great Britain and many other associations multiply and fructify.

celebrated and beautiful Lady Diana Manners.

Where Duff Cooper varied from what might otherwise be called the Chips Channon syndrome, was in his physical bravery. The First World War put a close to his rather dilettante early experiences of the Foreign Office. Daily champagne and clean linen were more easily dispensed with than he had imagined. On the Albert Canal in August 1918, as a lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards, he shot one German and captured eighteen others in a machine-gun position, and reported the experience of war as memorable and thrilling: "what the old poets said it was and what the new poets say it isn't". Patriotism, pure and simple, informed his response when he was next to see a militant Germany, at the 1935 Nuremberg party rally, and when he was able to do something to counter it, as Financial Secretary at the War Office.

Charmley has a very readable description of Duff Cooper's parliamentary rise, how much he owed to Lady Diana as a campaigner and ornament, and how much to Churchill as a like-minded friend. Loosely standing political opponents were Beaverbrook and Eden (who is discovered saying that "He didn't always want to be staying in Duff's way" when this was exactly what he did want, resenting the intrusion). As an overall verdict, it may well be right of Charmley to say that Duff Cooper had been fortunate to begin his career in the twilight of the last age of British power, and so able to have the sort of political career he wanted. It was not much of a reward for his stance over Munich to become Minister of Information in 1940, however, or to be sent to Singapore on a special mission shortly before its disastrous surrender to the Japanese, or finally as ambassador to de Gaulle in his finest and therefore most realistic hour.

Even authorized biographies are now supposed to spill beans, and Charmley does indeed supply the kind of intimate detail not in *Old Men Forget*. Duff Cooper had bursts of rage, known to his family and friends as "vein-ers" - a pleasing example is when he once rounded on Evelyn Waugh to give him a taste of his own medicine by shouting, "It's rotten of you to have brought about the downfall of the country", and much else besides. Heavy clubman's drinking shortened his

life. At several points Charmley judges him to have been selfish, short-sighted or insensitive (as when he sent his son John Julius to shelter in Canada for the war. "Stuff the little bugger full of nourishing vitamins" is about the most domestic remark of his to appear in this book).

As for his marriage, he appears to have been unfaithful to Lady Diana in his honeymoon, and ever afterwards. "Folly", to use his expression, were what he was after, in other words available or married women who spared him any onerous sense of duty. "I like to have a secret love affair, a hidden life, something to lie about." Lady Diana, according to this account, was complaisance itself, but she hardly need have been too alarmed. Consider no man fortunate who had affairs with Mrs Daisy Fellowes and Madame Louise de Vilmorin.

The latter relationship led to the accusation that as British Ambassador in Paris after the Liberation he was too welcoming to former collaborators. During the war, Louise de Vilmorin, then married to a Hungarian, had visited Germany, consorted with high-ranking Nazis and made no secret of her admiration for them. Were others of the kind among the Coopers' friends or guests? Charmley does not say. Nor does he mention a small tony of the period, that the house near Chantilly which the Coopers on retirement were offered by the French government, had previously been occupied on much the same terms by the wartime German Ambassador, Otto Abetz, whose Nazi books (now unfindable except in specialized collections) remain in the library there to this day.

Rather too often, Charmley produces some almost Wordsworthian phrase like "Battling in Belgravia", or lapses into a sentence as feeble as "If his beloved France had suffered, his even more precious London was about to follow suit." In general, the man finish hardly shows Duff Cooper in the colours of life. *Old Men Forget* was full of his day-to-day writings and there must be plenty more. The paucity of firsthand quotation is really to blame; Charmley cannot bring himself to quote at length from anything unpublished. The roar of privileged England dwindles to genteel chatter.

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# Seeing steadily and whole

Robert Adams

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0500 541116

Ansel Adams reminds us in his autobiography how disparate were the elements of his life. He photographed not only the glories of Yosemite, for instance, but, as a commercial photographer, risin bread, glassware, and everything else that promised a living (he enjoyed a large income only at the end of his career). His landscape work eventually sold millions of books, but appeared at one time on coffee cans too. He spoke publicly for conservation, but also on television for Datun cars. Though a man of great presence and dignity, he relished directing corny amateur theatricals. He hated the crowding of national parks, but had bumpously led group hikes in them. And though he devoted an amazing part of his time and income to helping others, he enjoyed driving a white Cadillac with a special licence plate and a horn that played seventy-two different tunes. Like many of his generation he seems never really to have faced what his country's economic system meant for the land.

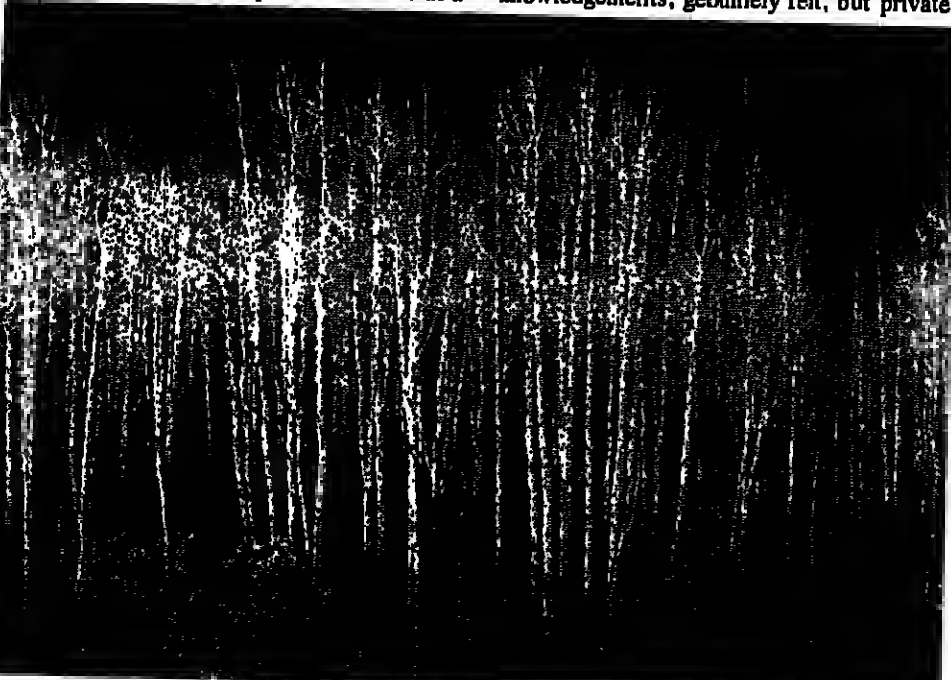
The autobiography makes clear, however, something more remarkable than the disparities and contradictions – he believed, with proper modesty, that the different aspects of his life had come to a kind of whole. It is perhaps not surprising that he did, since as an artist and an ecologist he spent his years finding unity in what at first seemed only diverse; when he photographed a landscape, no matter how intricate, he stressed its coherence, and by implication, the relatedness underlying nature.

In part he believed that the wholeness of his life – a life itself included in nature – had been a gift. He tells of three instances, in a final chapter called "Harmony", when his life was inexplicably spared. With such mysteries in mind he writes that "I have often had a retrospective vision where everything in my past life seems to fall with significance into logical sequence". He also believed, however, that some of the shape in our lives is of our own making, the result of our efforts to conform to principles. His father, whom he deeply loved, "considered a professor an obligation to be practiced well and passed on to others through teaching and example", and Ansel Adams worked to do this, helping to found the department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, the photographic magazine *Aperture*, and the national organization The Friends of Photography. It is apparent from these and other generous things that he wanted to match his private and public conduct with the harmony he saw in nature and recorded in his art. Adams was in many ways a romantic, but he never thought an artist was or ought to be separate from society. I suspect there were times when he would have agreed with Kierkegaard that to be an artist is to have your life stand as a satire on your art; nevertheless he tried his best to make them congruent.

There were conflicts of time and energy, of course, between being an artist and a public activist for conservation, and the book recounts the sense he occasionally had of the cost to his art of his conservation work. The problem was, at root, that though the two roles looked the same, they weren't; making successful photographs of nature accomplished little directly to save it. Art is not didactic, as he

knew ("I never intentionally made a creative photograph that related directly to an environmental issue"), and his greatest pictures, though thrilling, finally induced tranquillity, not a useful emotion to reformers.

Despite the necessity for Adams of pursuing two different activities, there was a unifying force behind his entire life. As Auden observed of Wordsworth – that he "early in life had an intense series of experiences about inanimate nature, which he spent the rest of his poetical life trying to describe" – so it can be said of Adams and the experience he had as a



Ansel Adams's "Aspens, Dawn, Dolores River Canyon, Autumn, Colorado", 1937. It is taken from the book reviewed here.

young man in the Sierra. The vividness of those early times, as remembered and reconstructed in a lifetime of photography, and elated again and again in his promotion of conservation, sets his work apart, and troubles us, because his was a passion beyond anything that we can feel now for places like the national parks, even though they look the same; his feeling for such places originated in the assumption of vast, undamaged spaces around the parks, without which they now seem almost trivial, a collection of eccentricities rather than emblems of a land.

There was a unity in most of Adams's artistic practice, too. Though he began in the soft-focus pictorial mode, by the time he decided to be a professional photographer (he spent his early years studying piano) he was close to having developed the style that remained his for the majority of his life – one employing sharp focus and a long tonal range of greys (photographs in the book, which were edited after his death, include some early and late views that use an uncharacteristically short scale of greys, reminding us of how consciously stylized were the best known of his pictures). "My vision established its own groove, as I know I have been derivative of myself for fifty years", Adams writes. Constancy of motivation and practice must surely have helped Adams focus his energies and achieve his vision. Landscape photography is a rigorous calling, not only physically – the equipment is heavy, and little happens if you don't keep moving – but in that it requires an alert, even tense patience. Few landscape photographers have, working within these demands, been inclined to apply their resources to radical shifts of subject or craft.

Constancy amounts to a problem, however, in the writing of an autobiography. The centre

of the life with which we are concerned here – Adams's art – is in important ways static, and thus not easily kept interesting. There are in the book many anecdotes – I enjoyed them – and statements on aesthetics, but our understanding of Adams's accomplishment doesn't change much once he finishes describing his early life. This may be why Adams found it, as he admits, difficult to begin writing – there was little fundamental that he hadn't said before. And no, with nothing pressing, the book occasionally resembles, at its weakest, a list of acknowledgements, genuinely felt, but private.

attempted of the urban/suburban world, a ture that weren't very successful), but the only response he offers here – that "it is just as important to bring to people the evidence of the beauty of the world of nature and of man as it is to give them a document of ugliness, squalor and despair" – is not nearly enough. It is as though he felt his life should appear as simple and effortless as does his art, and that that controversies and doubts should be forgotten. But the sense of forced affirmation is often uncomfortably evident. For example, when he discusses his commercial photography, which he had to practise at a cruelly burdensome rate right into his seventies, he insists it did no damage: "I learned greatly from commercial photography and in no way resent the time and effort devoted to it." Unless he needed it as a diversion – which if he did, suggests other problems – the sentiment is unconvincing and disappointing. If you believe, as I do, that art-even beautiful pictures of inherently beautiful subjects – is motivated to some extent by pain, then his reluctance to be candid about professional problems means that the book cannot be fully helpful in accounting for the art.

There are, however, many reasons to value the book. It is excellently illustrated and printed, and gracefully written. And Adams's opposition to the destruction of the environment is inspiring. It strengthened in proportion to the growth of the problem, which is not true of most of us, and his exemplary caring helps get us started again. He wasn't right on everything – he had a tendency to believe one always had to pick the lesser of the greatest evils, and so found himself supporting nuclear power – but his intentions were the best.

He enjoyed himself too, as he emphasizes convincingly many times. The joy was, I think, his serious reason for writing, and one blesses him, in Samuel Johnson's phrase, for his "willingness to be pleased". Adams quotes a friend whose sentiment he obviously shared: "The two most beautiful sounds in the world are the opening and closing click of the camera shutter." In the end, though, the lasting value of the book seems likely to be its reminder of the qualities of personal outlook and character that made possible his achievement – his belief that life was to be understood and lived constructively as a coherent whole, and thus as an example. They are convictions that limit the autobiography, but better a good life than a completely successful book.

## Poet as business man

John Thackara

PAUL RAND  
A Designer's Art  
256pp. Yale University Press. £25.  
0300 03483 0

Paul Rand is one of America's more thoughtful, serious and articulate designers. He is also the man who designed the logo that adorns Westinghouse nuclear missiles, and this, apparently, does not trouble him at all. Such contradictions make it hard to swallow the moral underpinning this book ("good design at heart is simply honesty"), but they are also typical of the design industry in general: ambiguity, wit and wickedness are its defining characteristics.

Rand's career as a designer for corporations such as Westinghouse, IBM and Cummins has depended on his ability to find and foster enlightened clients; as Moholy-Nagy put it, "he uses the language of the poet and the business man". This sets him apart from the majority of designers who, despite their self-professed skills as communicators, are not at all good at explaining to non-experts what it is that they do. This, as Rand understates, "is a serious problem in an area in which semantic difficulties so often arise". His theory is that design is concerned more with "conception than with execution"; it is a problem-solving activity. Although this position begs the question of who decides what the problem is, it neatly focuses attention on the methodology of design as a process. The best designers are masters of input and output, and Rand clearly has the analytical skills needed to survive in the biggest

corporate environments. In *A Designer's Art*, he makes the crucial point that good design is impossible unless the top decision-makers are committed to a project, and involved in it directly. "On the whole, industry lacks confidence in creative talent and creative work", he says, "and this is the most serious obstacle to raising standards of design." Trading the client and instilling confidence in him are, for Rand, part of the designer's job.

In his antipathy to "popular culture" as expressed graphically in graffiti and in *Peak* magazines, Rand is an old-fashioned modernist. "The indiscriminate use of typefaces, geometric patterns and abstract shapes is self-defeating when they function merely as a vehicle for self-expression", he proclaims before going on to describe how "advertisers of pharmaceuticals, more circumspect than others, use the light touch of humor for its soothing and profitable results"; good design can express the solpadeline, it seems, but not the self.

Happily, Rand's confused moral stance is less in evidence in the book's most successful section, where he discusses education. He invokes the best traditions of modernism in his objections to the dominance of style and technique over analysis and criticism in many design schools and colleges. And he obviously is a good teacher; unafraid of theory, he is concerned that students should, in A. N. Whitehead's words, be "studying something and not merely executing intellectual minutes". At the dead hand of vocationalism and lightness around the neck of British art and design curricula, Rand's advice on design teaching stands out; someone should send a copy to Sir Keith Joseph, and to the Department of Trade and Industry.

30 TLS May 16 1986 FILM

## Brilliance and bosh

Lindsay Anderson

IAN CHRISTIE  
Arrows of Desire: The films of Michael Powell  
and Emeric Pressburger  
127pp. Waterstone/Thames and Hudson.  
£17.95.  
084752 137

One of the few happy achievements of the New Criticism (Cinema division) has been the celebration – one might almost say the discovery – of Michael Powell. Now in his eighties, Powell has long been one of Britain's most prolific and certainly one of the most accomplished. Yet it is only recently that he has become respectable. He learnt his craft in the 1930s on simple-minded, unpretentious "quota quickie" thrillers and dramas, sometimes four or five in a year. (According to Ian Christie, out of a total of twenty-four of these, eighteen have disappeared.) In 1937 he stepped off the treadmill to make *The Edge of the World* on the far northern island of Foula – one of the first British films to desert the safety of the studio for the hazards and spectacular rewards of location shooting.

A very English formation, you might think. Not so. Powell was born in Canterbury and educated at the King's School and Dulwich College; but as a boy he was unEnglishly fascinated by the international art of the silent film (Chaplin and Feuillade, Griffith and Lang). His father ran a hotel at Cap Ferrat. This is how he landed his first job as an assistant to the Irish director Rex Ingram, a refugee from Hollywood, at the Victorine Studios in Nice. It was an extraordinarily lucky start, and it surely encouraged the American-style ambition and the European sense of style which were always to make Powell a distinctive presence in the cosy nest of British cinema.

The European connection persisted. Alexander Korda was impressed by *The Edge of the World* and engaged Powell to direct a thriller, *The Spy in Black*, with the German actor Conrad Veidt. But no one was bappy with the result. Then Korda introduced a fellow Hungarian, Emeric Pressburger, into the project. His rewrites saved the picture.

Powell and Pressburger, director and writer, fit off particularly well. They decided to become a team, set up a production company known as the Archers, and for nearly twenty years their films carried the credit "Written, Produced and Directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger". Indisputably these films included some of the most daring and original ever made in this country, such as *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *A Matter of Life and Death* and *The Red Shoes*. They were also some of the best crafted. In black-and-white and in colour, Powell always shot boldly; with a camera sense, a richness of lighting and composition unique in British cinema. The dispute is not about sensibility, but sense.

Most critics have always acknowledged the outstanding distinction of the Archers' work – but have found fault with their tendency to indulge and inflate. Today's fashion is to rate Powell and Pressburger as "the greatest creative partnership in the history of the British Cinema" (I quote from the blurb of *Arrows of Desire*). This is certainly the verdict of Ian Christie, who finds that the Archers belong to "a proud, popular tradition that runs from Bunyan and Blake, through Dickens, Stevenson, Kipling, Chesterton, Wells, and Shaw", with qualities of "dramatic virtuosity and moral complexity" that apparently need no exact definition. He is fair enough, though, to quote a contrary, perhaps rather grudging view put forward by Gavin Lambert in an early number of *Sequence*: "It is perhaps Powell's greatest virtue that his work is at once recognizably his and that it is not."

While *Arrows of Desire* traces his films have become more smooth, more confident, more central deficiencies have remained: the same old-fashioned, lack of development, an absence of "depth". The first two of these may not be quite right: "profeusion" and "superficiality" might be better. But the accusation of lack is one that demands a more convincing denial than Ian Christie manages to provide. Or, if not kitchen, at least an erratic and often

sentimental eccentricity. A *Caunterbury Tale*, for instance, evokes Chaucer's pilgrims to introduce a wartime story of a British sergeant, an American GI and a land-girl who end up in Canterbury Cathedral, their personal problems solved, after involvement with a Justice of the Peace who cares so deeply for the English heritage that he goes around at night pouring glue on the hair of girls who walk out with American servicemen. Beautifully filmed bosh? Or "One of the Archers' most daring experiments in reducing the importance of narrative" (Christie)? In *A Matter of Life and Death* a bomber crashes on return from a mission and the pilot, half in this world and half in the next, finds himself on trial in a modernist Hereafter, and saved for earthly existence by "a tear gathered on a rose". And the profundity of the wonderfully extravagant *Red Shoes* is not unfairly summed up in the exchange between the tyrannical impresario and the aspiring ballerina: "Why do you want to dance?" "Why do you want to live?"

The values that inform such criticism are not, of course, regarded as relevant by the New Critics, among whom Ian Christie surely numbers himself. To analyse a dramatic work (and, after all, this is what the Archers' films are) in terms of drama – of character, or consistency, or meaning – is somehow inapposite, old-fashioned. Christie relates such critical standards to "a complex and largely tacit cultural attitude which finds its most analytical expression in the pages of the literary journal *Scrutiny*". The key pejorative here is "literary": films are not to be judged in terms of meaning, that is hooish. Essentially the Archers are to be admired for their rejection of "English realism", and this rejection they somehow combine with "a sustained assault on good manners and good taste". This "realism", whether English or otherwise, is not defined; nor is the interesting fact discussed that some of the Archers' best work – the lyrical *I Know Where I'm Going* and the powerfully dramatic *Smile Room* – are fine examples of realist style. Finally it is never made clear how the "vision" of films like *Black Narcissus* and *The Tales of Hoffmann* justifies the quotation from Blake's "Jerusalem" which provides Christie with his title and which he quotes as epigraph.

The Archers split in 1956 – just why, we are not told. (The artists themselves – particularly Emeric Pressburger – are rather shadowy figures in this book.) Their last years of partnership had not been very successful; nor did they manage afterwards to sustain productive careers on their own. Pressburger wrote and produced a whimsical fable, *Miracle in Soho*, in which the stylistic flair of Powell was sorely missing. And in 1960 Michael Powell produced and directed (the script was by Leo Marks) an extraordinary exercise in Grand Guignol called *Peeping Tom*.

In *Peeping Tom*, a young German camera operator working in a British film studio commits a series of murders, able to find satisfaction only by photographing the terror of his girl victims at the point of death, as a bayonet flashes out of his camera to slash them in the throat. This horror fantasy met with a hysterical critical onslaught when it was first released, but it has since been "discovered" by a number of American directors – Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola among them – and now seems established as a seminal *auteurist* work. Of the twenty-one critics whose preferences are listed in the official British Film Year publication *A Night at the Pictures* (1985), nine chose *Peeping Tom* as one of their Ten Best Ever British films. Various productions of the Archers give them a total of eighteen further mentions.

Ian Christie does not have much to say about *Peeping Tom*, apart from noting its "disturbing authenticity" and that it may represent "a tilt at the fetish of documentary". Martin Scorsese is not much more helpful in his introduction when he tells us "I always felt that *Peeping Tom* and *8½* are the two great films that deal with the philosophy and the danger of film making". I would question that *Peeping Tom* is a great film; but in it Michael Powell surely composed an authentic personal allegory. Properly examined, it might tell us, a good deal more about this tremendously accomplished, sometimes silly, always considerable artist than has yet been said.

## Charm and hype

David Coward

ROGER VADIM  
Bardot, Deauville and Fonda  
296pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.  
0297 787462

In the only self-revealing passage in Roger Vadim's latest batch of memories, *Bardot, Deauville and Fonda*, he explains that life under the Occupation taught him enough about human nature and political reality to realize that the only valid recipe for survival was hedonism and a mistrust of commitment. He learnt to prefer situations which are "ambiguous, complicated, unclear", and admits that his understanding of the word truth "is rather vague".

In a society which has lost not only its gods but its aristocracy, the secret lives of the "stars" have acquired mythical status. In the current galaxy, Vadim is one of the most unusual meteors. He is the man who went on marrying the Most Beautiful Women in the World, and turned them into icons. Is he a hothouse opportunist? Or is he a vaguely tragic figure: the man outrun by the beauty and talent of the women he loves but who always abandons him? Vadim does not say. But he does not appear to mind either role. Glamour is all.

Even by the standards of the cinema industry, he is a phenomenon. He must be the only film-director who can drive the paparazzi to a frenzy. He remains the master-hypocrite, the grand showman. He protests mildly at his press image. He has been called Maehiavelli, Svengali and other not unflattering names, some of which he thought up himself. He has made a score of films, but he catches the public imagination less for what he has achieved than for what he is. He is Mr Dangerous Charm – the guy all men envy and all women want.

Vadim is far too astute to endanger his status by telling much of himself, for myths do not resist reality. "Self-critical public sessions are not my style", he remarks, though he does

unbend far enough to confess to forgetfulness and habitual lateness. He has never lifted a finger against a woman in his life, nor endowed material things with moral value, nor been slow to help young people make their way. He also has "a gift for raising children". Genial and teasing by turns, Vadim leads us on, dropping names (the Windsors turn up for coffee, Giscard pops in from next door), scattering intimacies (Annette Sroyberg lent him "Pir-flugl") and recalling that the spectacle of the bare bottoms of Bardot and Andress induced in him "a rush of emotion for art". As in Pygmalion of old.

Vadim's memoirs are dedicated to his future grandchildren. For them he sets the record straight while reliving the "joys and sorrows" of wild times gone by. He claims responsibility for wrecking a cultural revolution, for making nudist fun he liberated sexuality. *Et Dieu créa la femme* was a film of significance, a sociological bomb: "Simone de Beauvoir's hooks never frightened anyone. Brigitte's appearance on the screen caused panic." He denies that he was ever a Star Maker. More a Diamond Cutter. He puts us right about life with his mates to the finely calculated limits of the liberal laws. The unclothes are racy and there is no lack of wit-rattling inside. Bardot? A Child and a Romantic who could have been a ballerina. Deauville? "One had to say yes or be excommunicated." Fonda? She was, of course, a tangle who found self-confidence and a sense of political awareness under Vadim's moulding hands.

This is clearly not the whole story, merely the froth on the champagne. There is little here for the sociologist, for the cinema historian or even for the prurient, and nothing of substance is added to what was made public in the *Memoires du Diable* (1975), which the dust-jacket disloyally describes as "fiction". Nothing, that is, except the quite shameless claim that Vadim coined the word *discotheque*. Anyone who can admit to that, let alone boast of it, deserves to have the sky fall on his head.

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## Eric Korn

America is always the New World, but arriving at Kennedy the day after the Tripoli raid was like stepping into a different history. The discordant perceptions had, I think, as much to do with a trick of the time zones as with satirical characteristics (like us all being spineless appeasers and them all being raving shoot-ists). Americans, or at least East Coast Americans, got the Pentagon version in the evening, followed by the President's statement, and went to bed in an atmosphere of resolute action and surgical precision. Europeans woke to newsreel shots of dead babies, and Reagan's words a stale irony. Even for dissident Americans, the civilian casualties were made to seem a regrettable by-product, rather than the product of that wilful indifference to inevitable consequences that is, precisely, the mind of the terrorist. Language, as usual, took nearly the worst beating. A spokesman at least sane enough to dress himself and appear on television, dressed himself, appeared on television, and said that this was the most successful single operation "in the whole annals of American military history". Yes, he did; I heard him.

I was braced to find off congratulations on my wonderful Prime Minister, but they did not come. The problem was dealing with friends who thought that European objections had to do with a fear of reprisals, or those who spoke out about resisting blackmail while regretting that they wouldn't be seeing us at the London Book Fair this summer. It isn't too late to change your plans again. You will be Standing Up to Terror, and giving a vital boost to my OPEC-revamped economy. Security at Park Lane is being stepped up. Bombs have to be in sealed parcels with a "SOLD" sticker, and shall be giving away iodine tablets with each purchase of more than £12.50. Bibliophages who lick vellum bindings are of course taking an unacceptable risk.

A quick scan of London newspaper head-

lines is a vaccine against moral chauvinism: "Gotcha / Thrilled to Blitz / 70,000 Red Tots May Die / Freddie Starr Ate My Hamster" I murmured, talismanically as the gung-hoer Pentagoners sounded off. "Now will you believe that we are all monsters?" asked a Californian friend. The answer, after very little thought, was still no.

The world is fuller of memorable titles than of memorable books, but high is the wit-and-wisdom-of-Millard-Fillmore category (Millard Fillmore, President Who, one of the rare persons in history famous for being obscure: so securely founded a fame will last more than five minutes) comes *Pensées Ingleuses*, or a collection of the Bright Sayings, Sublime Thoughts and Witty Sentences of the most celebrated Fathers of the Church viz St Ambrose St Austin St Chrysostom St Cyprian St Gregory St Jerome Origen Tertullian etc.

It was translated from the French of the ingenious Bouhours, and published n.d. but about 1710 by Corbett, though in truth all he did was take an earlier edition and put a now and misspell title on it, as well as cancelling an indecency or Indelicacy on page 152 (if anyone has the uncanceled leaf I'd be glad to hear). There's a preface whose cool effrontery I envy: Perhaps this Translation may want several Apologies. I shall make but one for the Translator, and another for the Original. When the Reader sees some Errors in the Orthography [sic], some Passages omitted without Design, and some transposed; he is desir'd to think the Translator living at a Distance from the Press, an Excuse. As for the Original, that some of the Fathers have severe and cynical invectives upon the SEX, I can only say: They did not know the Virtues of the English Women; if they had, they would perhaps have been more Complaisant; and had not recommended so much a solitary Life, but adv'd them to converse in the World, for the Example, or Reproach, of MEN.

to drop you off at that castle over there. Worst thing is, t haven't got the bit about Psychic Defence: a simple matter of powering up the aura, t gather, but the details are in the next volume . . .

I have a rectangle of paper here that figures a drowsy crustacean and is headed, touchingly, HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR LOBSTER. A salutary lesson, this seems, for those who thought caring for lobsters came naturally, like mother love. "Do refrigerate me when I arrive" it suggests. Do save the seaweed, I like to sleep on top of it. Don't put me in the bathtub. I drown in fresh water. Then, unexpectedly: Do eat me as soon as possible.

"Any questions? Call the lobster hotline." "Hullo, is that 0-800 LOBSTER?" I have a few questions. Moral questions. Theological questions about the nature of care. Questions about the lobster with the altruistic gene, whimpering to be eaten. Questions . . .

Lobsterline (chelped over mouthpiece): "Got another one here, third today. I'll take it, angel. Yes, Sir, that's the absolute paternal care that we may die if we do well, as your non-Crustacean poet Eliot has it. You need to listen to station K-LAW, the Voice of the Lobster, where even Homard sometimes nods, and talk to our in-house decapod preacher, Richard Griffin . . ."

Which is how I came to hear of Richard Griffin, lobster Laureate and a lunatic of major importance, author of at least three books of verse, *The Delaware Bride*, *A Tale of Frances' Tavern* (1765) and, most relevant to our concerns, *The Lobster's Gizzard* (1916, by the

author, no place, but surely New York) first lines of the title poem reveal the man. Put on your thinking cap. Scorn your ootched ear-lobe. Go run another lap. What a botched queer globe.

It's a ballad, of sorts, about Mike O'Hara the Hill of Tara, determined to get the gins in a frightful blizzard, urged on, ambushed by the equivocal figure of the Wizard, (the apple tree / There waits your job. Farewell and think of me / Don't fail me Slobster"). Michael pursues his quarry, but turns out to be a phantom lobster and he drowned in a bog like the last of the Baskin-Wizards. The king of the blizzard / Triumphant the Wizard / Now laughs at the lizard / The lobster's gizzard / Comes in for its joke / O Woe did Mike croak? / Unfortunate bloke / O Woe did he croak? / Poor bloke O Poor Bloke.

And there is a photograph of the poet, his eyes and little hatchet, with a lobster on fork.

Other topics dealt with by Griffin are Padenis McGuire, who fatally swallows a cap-tipped in his coffee, legal flogging in Delaware, the Woman Without any Bars, death in prison ("They buried him in the jailyard, / Along with a bunch of yoggs / Dejected chums of the lock-step, society's lowest dregs, / In a pit of lime, one puddle of grime, like ill-conditioned eggs"), the Dodo ("Thy graceful back is seen no more, thy voice no longer leads the flock") and memorably, a fire in an asylum, a Baskin vision entitled "Water on the Brain".

See the carcasses all charred. Filling up the Bug House Yard, Twisted into many shapes. Like huge worms, those made like tapers. Of all sizes, big and little, Crisp and brown, both soft and brittle, But quite free from earthly pain. No more water on the brain.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

- Robert Adams is the author of *Beauty in Photography: Essays in defense of traditional values*, 1981.
- Lindsay Anderson's most recent production for the theatre was *Hamlet* in Washington, DC. He has just completed a documentary film on the visit of the rock group, Wham, to China.
- Gillian Butler is a clinical psychologist who works in the University of Oxford Department of Psychiatry.
- Michael Butler's *The Plays of Max Frisch* was published last year.
- Eduardo Cawley is the editor of the *Latin American Newsletter*. His *Dictators Never Die: A portrait of Nicaragua and the Somozas* was published in 1979. He is the author of *A House Divided: Argentina 1880-1980*, 1984.
- Ronald Frankenberg has recently been concerned with developing a Centre for Medical Anthropology at the University of Keele. He is the author of *Communities in Britain: Social life in town and country*, 1966.
- Peter Graves is a lecturer in German at the University of Leicester.
- Peter Hebblethwaite's most recent book, *In the Vatican*, will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.
- Robert Irwin's novel *The Limits of Vision* was published recently. His *The Middle Ages in the Middle Ages* appeared earlier this year.
- Louis Jacobson's books include *Hasidic Prayer*, 1972, and *A Jewish Theology*, 1974.
- Nicholas Jenkins is an editor of *Oxford Poetry* and is preparing a critical edition of W. H. Auden's *The Double Man*.
- Christopher Johnson is Economic Advisor to Lloyds Bank and editor of *Lloyds Bank Review*. He is a specialist adviser to the Treasury Select Committee of the House of Commons, which published his memorandum *The Misalignment of the Dollar* in 1985.
- Donald King-Hale's book *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* was published earlier this year. His books include *Observing Earth Satellites*, 1983.
- Robbie Littlewood is a senior lecturer in Psychiatry at the University of Birmingham. He is the author, with Maurice Lipsedge, of *Alms and Altruism*, 1982.
- H. R. Loya is Professor of History at Westfield College, University of London, and the author of *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500-1087*, 1984.
- D. D. R. Owen is Professor of French at the University of St Andrews. His books include *The Legend of Roland: A pageant of the Middle Ages*, 1973.
- Patricia Phillips is writing a book on the social history of women in science from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.
- Christopher Prendergast is a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and the author of *Balzac: Fiction and melodrama*, 1978.
- David Pryor-Jones is the author of *Cyril Connolly: Journal and memoir*, 1983. His novel, *The Afternoon Sun*, was published earlier this year.
- Michael Rosen is a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford and the author of *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism*, 1982.
- Alan Ryan is a Fellow of New College, Oxford. His *Property and Political Theory* was published in 1984. His second is a lecture in the History of Science at Imperial College London. His book, *Controversy in Victorian Geology: The Cambrian-Silurian dispute* will be published this summer.
- Joel Skovronsky's novel, *The Engineer of Human Souls*, 1985, has recently been reissued in paperback. The English translation of his *The Bass Saxophone* was published in 1977. His novel, *Dvořák in Love*, will be published this summer.
- Lawrence Stone is Director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University. His *An Open Elite: England 1540-1880*, 1984, has recently been republished in paperback.
- Michael Tansley is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Cambridge.
- John Thelander was until recently editor of *Daring* magazine. His anthology of critical essays on design and new technology, *Design After Modernism*, will be published shortly.
- Seán Wilentz is the author of *The Ravished Ubbes, Or how to ruin masterpieces by restoration*, 1985.
- Martin Warner's *Joan of Arc: The image of female heroism* was published in 1981. Her *Monuments and Madonnas: The allegory of the female form* was published last year.
- J. J. White is Reader in German at King's College, London. He is co-editor of *Mullin Focus*, 1984.

## Letters

## Robbins and After

Sir, - The correspondence that has developed from Noel Annan's review (April 11) of my book *Government and the Universities in Britain* tempts me to comment, as the review itself did not, even though I found some of the opinions in it difficult to disentangle from my own; so I hope readers of my book will succeed in doing so.

I can understand John Fletcher's being nettled (Letters, April 18) by the passage in which Lord Annan seems to suggest that the academic world has nobody to blame for its present plight but itself. That was not the conclusion of my study, which attempts to describe a tragedy in terms of social, economic and political forces which were not as a whole within the control of dons, civil servants, or ministers. Macbeth, Othello, and even Hamlet, had their faults but one does not leave the theatre muttering "Well, after all he brought it all on himself": particularly, perhaps, if one has acted a part.

Universities, by their nature, claim free enquiry and long-term guarantees of resources. Governments, by their nature, must respond to the events of day to day in what they see as the public interest, and cannot give such guarantees. No financial system will wholly eliminate the resulting tension. The financial system which Annan criticizes as non-viable was no less viable than any other, and by giving medium-term but limited block grants it minimized the tension, while promoting efficiency and economy by giving maximum freedom to local managements. Centralized, short-term, line-by-line budgeting is, believe me, more expensive.

Inflation, the oil crisis and student rebellion were the chief destructive agents of the Quinquennial System. But what was far more serious was the failure of society and its broader educational arrangements to respond to the opportunities it said so loudly it wanted in science and technology. That was not the fault of the universities, which performed prodigies in providing opportunity; nor was it the fault of governments - they spent oceans of money. But the failure has cost this country dear, and so only in its universities.

"Why," asks Professor Fletcher, "were we not told it was all too expensive?" One can answer that a great deal of Robbins was in fact trimmed off almost at once, and not, as Annan somehow manages to suggest, at some later stage of panic realization. One can say, too, that in the Whitehall of that time there was a determination that the prospectus should be fulfilled in terms of quality, unlike the expansiveness carried out in some other countries. Perhaps this was a mistake. But the real point is that "too" is a relative word. What my book is about is how it became too expensive. It was in my book engaged in history, not controversy.

On a small point, Annan's statement that the Comptroller and Auditor General was "put in to check university expenditure" is misleading, whichever sense of "check" is intended. Once the university programme became important it was impossible to exempt it from the parliamentary audit (invariably retrospective), which applies to all programmes substantially financed from parliamentary funds.

JOHN CARSWELL,  
5 Prince Arthur Road, London NW3.

## 'First with the News'

Sir, - For all its invocation of "sound history", Charles Wilson's reply (Letters, April 18) to my review of *First with the News* (February 21) is largely puff, puff and half-splitting. To maintain, for example, that W. H. Smith's operating a bookstall for five years in Edinburgh represents an innovative expansion into Scotland is perverse. And it ignores the main point of whether Smith's have been by nature an innovative or cautious firm. Also perverse is the claim that the ennobling of the Smith family is not presented as part of the virtuous rewarded schema that underlies Wilson's narrative. (I did not, incidentally, say that the title was for selling newspapers; but this is to split hairs.) As for the sweetly unrepentant workforces, I should have said "below management" rather than "below boardroom" level.

PETER KEMP,  
61 Prince Avenue, London N3.

some extraordinarily paternalistic attitudes on to the lower echelons of Smith's workforce. He asserts that the "employees" (all of them, at all periods, apparently) far from resenting the wealth and status of the partners, accepted it as natural and well deserved because they (the employees) saw it as analogous to the priestly privileges of the keepers of the Ark of the Covenant. I don't find the evidence for this in his book, nor at Victoria Station when they my paper there. Nor, given Wilson's overwhelming approval of Smith's and what it stands for, do I see criticism in the half-sentence that at an atypical phase of its development the firm's labour relations "sometimes" resemble those of modern Japan. On the evidence, I would assume Wilson admires Japanese industrial relations.

I valued Wilson's book more than he does my review. But with its many strengths, I thought it too friendly to its subject and too willing to reflect the firm's own sense of itself. And I found his account of Smith's censoriousness incomplete. These are not objections answered by his letter.

JOHN SUTHERLAND,  
California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California 91125.

## Demetrios Capetanakis

Sir, - Your reviewer of A. T. Tolley's *Poetry of the Forties* (May 2) writes: "There are odd statements dotted throughout the book . . . Demetrios Capetanakis, the Greek poet-friend of John Lehmann, is likened to Emily Dickinson (judicious)."

It seems a pity that this rare mention of Capetanakis (or Kapetanakis) in your pages should be so belittling or worse. Nearly forty years ago you praised his poem about Emily Dickinson as "a place of literary criticism in verse". In the Lehmann edition Edith Sitwell wrote: "This sympathy [for Emily Dickinson] was not extraneous, for it fused the inner life of the writer with that of his subject, made Capetanakis a great critic."

I think anyone interested in Emily Dickinson will value Capetanakis's poem. There are at least two other poems which deserve a place in anthologies. "Cambridge Bar Meditation" is a succinct and unforgettable poem about "Cambridge" at a particular moment in history. And "The Isles of Greece" is both a fine war poem and an ironic salutation to romantic tradition. Edith Sitwell describes it as "a strange, beautiful poem with its harsh and unresisting grief, its tragic embodiment". Neither poem is faultless, but they are distinguished creations. They sharpen our understanding of "Cambridge" and Byron.

Your anonymous review of 1947 judged that "it is obvious that Capetanakis was fitted to play a special part in English literary life. . . . His talent, though a minor one, was peculiarly refined." If poetry is useful then Capetanakis deserves to be better known and used.

G. D. KLINGOPULOS,  
Southwell, Wheel Road, Alington, Norwich.

## 'White Suit Blues'

Sir, - I'm afraid that, in his dogged defence of *White Suit Blues* (Letters, May 9) Adrian Mitchell is barking up the wrong tree just as much as he was in his play. Comment on Twain's divided personality didn't, as Mitchell appears to believe, originate with Justin Kaplan's 1966 biography, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*. Blatantly apparent in his books and life, it was a phenomenon noted by such contemporaries as William Dean Howells. And it received full-scale attention at least as far back as 1920 with Van Wyck Brooks's *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*. Also, although Susy Clemens had as a child relished *Huckleberry Finn*, even then she "gradually came to think as mama did" in feeling that it needed censoring. Later - preferring her father's "sweet and beautiful" productions like *The Prince and the Pauper* or *Joan of Arc* - she expressed strong dislike of works associated with his comic persona as Mark Twain ("How I hate that name! I should never like to hear it again!").

PETER KEMP,  
61 Prince Avenue, London N3.

## 'Plain Words'

Sir, - I am no lover of Gowers's *Plain Words*, but Anthony Burgess's boast that "readers of the TLS are beyond matters of mere correctness" strikes me as even sillier. Is any sensible use of language beyond it? And is not that what makes correct - exact - usage important? To pretend, as Burgess seems to do at the end of his review (May 9), that actions do not have to be indicated by words, in official correspondence as elsewhere, is merely frivolous. Reality will keep showing up, as people know if they get the wrong money from the Social Security.

C. H. SISSON,  
Moorfield Cottage, The Hill, Langport, Somerset.

## Anne Bracegirdle

Sir, - Jean Haynes's letter (May 2) on the baptism of Anne Bracegirdle clears up a long-standing problem about the actress's early career. In the absence of other information, her date of birth has been assumed to be 1663, by working back from her date of death, 1748, and her age as given on her tomb, eighty-five. Edmund Curll claimed, in his *History of the English Stage* (1741), that Anne Bracegirdle's first appearance was as Cordello in Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* (1680), a role described in the text as played by "the little girl". That makes a lot more sense if the little girl was aged eight and always seemed improbable if Anne Bracegirdle was seventeen. It also makes much more likely the idea that she was the "Miss Nanny" who played Clit and spoke the Epilogue in D'Urfey's *A Commonwealth of Women*, which had its premiere in 1685 - again a more plausible description for a thirteen-year-old actress than for a woman of twenty-two.

Other pieces of the jigsaw of her first roles fall better into place now. Her roles for Congreve, culminating in her performance as Millamant in the first production of *The Way of the World* in 1700, now belong to an actress in her twenties, not thirties. Quite how and why her tombstone aged nine years to her age is a new mystery.

PETER HOLLAND,  
Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

## A. S. Neill at Gretna

Sir, - On April 25 you noticed a paperback reprinting of A. S. Neill's *A Donnie's Log*. I well remember the enthusiastic reception, in 1915, of the first appearance, by my own teacher, who was a severe disciplinarian of the style condemned by Neill. I was not old enough to see a paradox in this, but later I realized that Neill's saving grace of humour was the factor that won many teachers over to his side.

It is not at all known that Neill's head-mastership at Gretna, which constituted the catalyst in his educational philosophy, was so exceptional in its circumstances as to merit the term unique. I was not only well acquainted with Gretna by residence and ancestry, but I was for many years a personal friend of Major Tom Blackburn, the schoolmaster of Gretna, who, by implication, was condemned in *A Donnie's Log*, as he was the author's predecessor.

Gretna was described in the Imperial Gazetteer of 1865 as having been for three centuries the most outstandingly demoralized, unruly and uncivilized parish in broad Scotland, due mainly to the corruption associated with the Gretna marriages. The school was a reflection of this, and Tom Blackburn had a herculean task in reducing it to some semblance of order, not helped by the parsimony of the Parish Council. Being a Reservist, he was called up in 1914, severely injured in France, and discharged as a prisoner, leaving his school to Neill and a predictable chaos. But Blackburn was a magnanimous man and when he invited Neill to lunch in London later in the war (Neill then a lieutenant of artillery) the conversation never turned to *A Donnie's Log*. In justice to Tom Blackburn any future reprint of *A Donnie's Log* should include a footnote on the uniqueness of Gretna.

FORBES MACGREGOR,  
17 Kalmes Road, Edinburgh.

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# COMMENTARY

## Penetrative powers

Sarah Walden

The Hidden Face of Manet: An investigation of the artist's working processes  
Courtauld Institute Galleries, until June 15

X-rays of paintings are no longer anything new. Artists themselves are becoming unhealthily conscious of their potential (Andrew Wyeth included in one of his paintings a bag whose contents can only be revealed under X-ray), and restorers have occasionally been known to misuse this invaluable technology as a pretext for probing defenceless Old Masters.

Juliet Wilson Barau's exhibition *The Hidden Face of Manet* exploits these penetrative powers to their best advantage. It introduces us, with the connivance of X-ray photography, as unintended witnesses to the lonely struggle behind the creation of a work of art. In the intimate setting of the Courtauld Institute Galleries we see the alterations, eliminations and gradual refocusing of ideas behind the deceptively spontaneous surfaces of five of Manet's greatest Salon masterpieces. The Courtauld itself contributed much to the early pioneering of the technology of art history. But the exhibition, sponsored by the *Burlington Magazine* as part of the appeal for the new Courtauld Institute at Somerset House, is easily readable by the layman. It is not just nrid analysis; it helps us to see how one of the first painters of the modern era used the great classical tradition as a springboard to a new freedom.

Manet's incisive strokes of rich paint, his clear focus and luminous contrasts, lend themselves especially well to forensic technology. Lead white pigment, which stands out so starkly under X-ray, was still in general use in his time, before being gradually superseded by titanium, and adds greatly to the legibility. With its help, we see how Manet painted out a Titianesque landscape with a distracting dog from "Le déjeuner sur l'herbe" to emphasize

the principal figures: "La concision en l'art est une nécessité et une élégance", as the artist himself wrote. We can trace too how, stage by stage, he moved the serving girl's reflection in the mirror of the "Bar aux Folies-Bergère" to an unreal distance in a similar search for clarity and concentration.

The difficult birth and troubled life of "The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian" is especially well documented here. As an afterthought, Manet substituted kpis for sombrero to underline France's betrayal of the Emperor; a sketch from Copenhagen shows how he clarified the space behind the victim's head by converting a wide-brimmed hat into a halo; and prints and drawings illustrate how the same firing squad came to be trained upon the Communards in another sketch for an unrealized picture.

X-ray negatives are often just that - evidence of the paths an artist chose not to pursue, or tracks he decided to cover. In Manet's case, the evidence is more positive, charting a very purposeful progression towards the finished surface. It is all highly instructive and intriguing, provided that we do not allow ourselves to be distracted from the final aesthetic achievement. Art historians would surely wish to avoid placing more reliance on covert sources, with their enticing secrets, than on the intelligence of their own eyes.

The current issue of the *Burlington Magazine* (April 1986, £5.75) contains a catalogue of the exhibition *The Hidden Face of Manet*. The catalogue has 104 colour and black-and-white illustrations, detailed notes, a bibliography, a technical summary and an exhibition checklist, as well as an essay on "Manet's Naïveté" by Johe House and detailed discussions by Juliet Wilson Barau of "La Nympe surprise", "Le déjeuner sur l'herbe", "Olympia", "The Execution of Maximilian" and Manet's café series of 1877-82.

## Fact-gathering forces

H. R. Woudhuysen

Domesday  
Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London WC1, until September 30

Undoubtedly the star exhibits at the Domesday Book exhibition are the special effects by Living Images: two holograph-talking heads attached to model bodies dressed in the statuary brown which everyone seems to have worn in the Middle Ages. The first head is that of the monk who compiled the Peterborough Chronicle taking rather a dim view of the Anglo-Norman bureaucracy which commissioned and made use of the Domesday Book. The second is of the Book's "only begetter", William the Conqueror ordering the book to be drawn up, flanked by Orderic Vitalis. The Chronicle speaks in Old English followed by a modern English translation; King William is only allowed to express himself in a Clousau-like French accent. William, we are told, was five feet ten inches tall.

The two figures embody the exhibition's rather relentless desire to entertain as well as to inform. Elsewhere there is a model of a genuine, but silent English peasant taking a rest from his plough, a wolf attacking a wild boar, a demonstration of parchment-making (between 500 and 1,000 sheep went into the making of the Book), and the inevitable computers checking and analysing every serif, beak and female jester in eleventh-century England. The Book itself, now rebound in five volumes, is not at first sight very impressive, but it is the detail it contains, gathered in over two years, which is so astonishing - the attempt to bring order to the worthy rural world of post-Conquest England.

While the Book itself is the focus of the exhibition it raises a suspicion that the Norman Conquest is in fact the more interesting subject. One of the rooms is split between a reconstruction of the lower chamber of the Exchequer where the Book was kept in Queen

Elizabeth's reign and a Victorian drawing-room with a family looking at magic lantern slides from children's books illustrating the history of the Conquest. This room also has Ford Madox Brown's "The Death of Harold" cunningly hung so as to make it unviewable and a modern patchwork of staggering bideousness (in a supposedly Pre-Raphaelite style) of "The Domesday Commissioners and the Countess Judith".

Where the exhibition is at its most interesting to the non-specialist is in its attempt to place the Domesday Book in the later social and political history of Great Britain. The Victorians came out of this as the most enterprising and bizarre users of this national symbol, seeing it on the one hand as representing the death of the old, virile native English culture and on the other as beginning the civilized state, which is able to govern the country efficiently because it has all the necessary facts readily available.

What Domesday means in our own times is a little more uncertain. Not only in its extensive advertising campaign, but in every room in the exhibition we are told that it is sponsored by the *Daily Telegraph* and Prudential Assurance, as if Domesday were the favourite reading matter of retired colonial servants with sensible life insurance policies - which in a sense it was. This impression is reinforced by the complete Domesday kit which is available: the moment you leave the exhibition, the most grotesque of these is the Domesday Chair, costing several hundred pounds, made, of course, out of solid oak (presumably English) and whose special attraction is that it has various secret hiding places; in particular a place underneath its seat where the lucky purchaser can keep his family Bible. No doubt there is also room for a couple of Domesday Book Tahiti somewhere, and a Domesday power tankard, but the real enthusiasm will need a whole library for all the editions of the Book itself which are on sale.

(Various Domesday publications are reviewed by H. R. Loyd on page 126)



The Courtauld Institute Galleries' "Le déjeuner sur l'herbe", c.1864-67, now thought to be painted later than the version in the Galeries du Jeu de Paume; one of several versions of the painting in the exhibition reviewed here.

## Aberrant obsessions

Peter Kemp

Arena: Saint Genet  
BBC 2

What Arena's recent film on Jean Genet - re-shown as an obituary tribute - displayed most interestingly was the way in which his prison experiences were locked into his literature. From his illegitimate birth onwards, it seems, Genet was shut out from the usual. Famed out, wearing the distinctive clothing of the French Public Assistance child, to peasants in the Morvan, he was visibly an outsider even as a youngster. Reformatory and periods of incarceration in fourteen different prisons followed. Out of these jail sentences his books grew. Homosexuality, another factor barring him from the conventional, was prominent in his early surroundings; too, something clips from films of his prison fiction here demonstrated. As males pent up in adjoining cells ejaculated smoke at each other out of straws thrust through crevices in the wall, penile and anal images heatedly fused.

Prison released Genet's imagination. At the reformatory, he recalled, warders liked to witness dramas of domination and submission acted out between the boys; a scenario from which his plays developed. From a subsequent place of incarceration - a monastery converted into a jail - came another key motif. The penitentiary and the penitential interviews in Genet's mind as he noted how - wearing their own homespun brown garb - convicts went through rituals and routines as prescribed and circumscribed as those formerly followed by the monks. "We belonged to the Middle Ages", Genet remarked. Out of costume drama later flourished through his plays (almost the only theatrical pieces he'd seen before them), it emerged revealingly, were works by Alexander Dumas. Obsessed with uniformity and altercations, they endlessly spotlight dressing-up. Outfits advertise inner states. Clothing denotes status and power - just as between warders and prisoners.

As extracts reminded you - a robbed judge grovelling to a prostitute, a servant masquerading as her mistress - role-reversals are frequent in Genet's work. Opposites forces, and deviants, bourgeois and lumpen proletariat, white and blacks, gaolers and inmates, the glamorous and the squalid. All of this seems traceable back to prison's polarities - as do other extreme. Memories of cell-life - faintly and regulation top-dressing - inform even Genet's responses to late Rembrandt paintings painted in a prose piece of his, for their

suggestions of smelly, secreting bodies behind the robes and insignia.

Fascinated by contrasts, Genet also specialises in contrariness - as his interview on Arena with Nigel Williams hilariously bore witness. Turning the tables on his questioner was a technique to which he devoted himself with perversa zest, and in Williams - continually atopped in his tracks as he conducted the interview in halting French - he found an all-too-ready victim. Linguistic discomfiting occasionally proved handy for upsetting things: a not immaculately enunciated query about Genet's interest in "amour" was mockingly misinterpreted as an inquiry about "la mort". But, mainly, Genet's strategy was to exploit with withering quick-wittedness the naive broad-mindedness Williams - like some ingenious social worker trying to get on the right side of an old lag - brought to the interview. Fixed by the beady eye of the veteran jailbird, Williams sought to establish some rapport by confiding that he himself "stole as a child". But such overtures of fellowship got short shrift. Healthily contemptuous of the bogus - he was particularly scathing about the "pseudo-revolutionaries" historically harsanguing each other in an occupied theatre during the 1968 disturbances in Paris - Genet mauled Williams's portentous promptings with derisive ease. Asked solemnly of one of his prose extracts. "Is that the real Genet?", he responded with mock-innocence. "Is there a false one going around?" The maladroït accousta that he was "one of the first to have spoken" of homosexuality was rejected with the snort. "What are you talking about?"

Discerning that he had found a stooge apparently willing to submit to any outrageous demand, Genet amused himself by rapping out increasingly preposterous commands: the sound-technician should speak (obediently he proffered a few words); the camera should be turned on the television team (a cowed-looking line-up of Williams and his crew dutifully appeared on the screen). Chivvied from one absurdity to another, Williams gained nothing by his placatory concessions but further black-bats. Some of these turned out to be slightly well aimed. "You... want to transform me into a myth", Genet grumbled in the programme's final minutes - presently, it transpires. For, subsequent to this Arena session Williams has testified that his crafty tormentor was "the most saintly man I ever met".

"In Conversation" at the ICA seminar room on Wednesday May 21 presents Judith Williams, author of *Decoding Advertisements and Countersurveys*, who will discuss the social structures implicit in television, film, fiction and photography with film-maker Jane Cousins Mills.

## Tom and Mania

Nicholas Jenkins

CAROLINE BEHR  
Possum in The Bughouse  
Old Red Lion, Islington, London EC1.

Up on the first storey of the Old Red Lion it is Spring 1953, and "Possum" Eliot has come through three electronic gates to reach Chestnut Ward and "Rabbit" Pound. On the face of it, this comedy, a sketch of the pair's awkward, additive relations during the visit, is a return to the intriguingly vague question of Tom and Mania. It is also, however, a chance to savour, or recoil from, the naturalistic but factually inaccurate representation of two of the century's greatest poets; and, finally, this becomes the real point of the evening. Caroline Behr's play offers the temptation in a particularly concentrated form: Nick Simons as a folksy, cussing Pound and Peter Stockbridge as a wearied Eliot, while not sprading the St Elizabeths hospital room. This has been tactfully disarranged by Graham Wynne so as to emphasize its inhabitant's messy narcissism. The dialogue recovers occasional lift and re-direction from a bleak Nurse and Pound's dreamy acolyte, Will.

Prior to the creation of a single line, the audience's interest is, of course, guaranteed by the historical importance of the writers, but, in

any case, they are promising subjects, for if neither possessed a strong dramatic sense, both were manifestly theatrical in character. V. S. Pritchett even described Eliot as "a company of actors inside one suit". At the end, though, one creeps blinking into the Islington sunlight, mildly embarrassed by the gulf between the weight of known facts and this languid fiction. The initial advantage of using familiar characters vanishes rapidly in performance; the play's *donnée* makes it hard, in retrospect, to see how the actual tensions of the friendship can be preveeted from dissolving into voyeurism. The effect is more disturbing in Pound's case, partly because of his intensely problematic status and partly because he suffers the more cavalier surgery.

Possum in The Bughouse presents the most ing of the two men as the villed exposure of Eliot's celebrity and pease of mind to Pound's phantasmagoric baiting: "I knew I'd get you in the end I knew I'd bug you!" yelps the incarcerated poet - a consistently reductive force in the place - after he has questioned the motives for Eliot's saintly abnegations. The annual visit to discuss the possibilities for Pound's release becomes, then, at once a penance and a gratification, but in order to generate Possum's confession of this ("Coming to see you is an ordeal... that it is good for me to undergo"), Rabbit must be written into a blunt instrument. This involves, at the least, a

great deal of factual blurring. The most glaring instance is the implantation of Eliot's bronchitis and hypochondria in his friend who, throughout the play, fingers his pills with a Jacobean money-lender's relish. Indeed, the seedy crassness of Simons's Pound is powerful enough to destroy the drama's intended focus on Eliot. Even so, as the play wears on, one feels a perverse longing for something wilder to poke its head round the door shouting or drooling.

The thematic necessity of altering Pound into an embodiment of Eliot's physical and emotional frailties entails other distortions. In moral terms, the largest of these is the exclusion of Dorothy Pound, who attended her husband on almost every day of his imprisonment. In dramatic terms, a schema which requires a Pound of drawing petulance to counterpoint Eliot's sodden *humeur* has to banish the Coleridgean volatality of the talk he directed at a stunned queue of writers, countesses and young Social Creditors. Once again, there is abundant testimony that the real was altogether headier than this play allows. In a drama with no deep plot momentum, or a commitment to dull, factual portrayal, the basic literary index of success could only be verbal. Giving up on Rabbit, nine poets for the verneence or refinement of the Eliot thot Lowell saw "lost in the dark night of the brilliant talkers". But he is not there.

## A ship of state

Randall Stevenson

PETER ARNOTT  
Thomas Muir's Voyage to Australia  
Tron Theatre, Glasgow

Described in the Tron Theatre's programme as "one of the great forgotten heroes of Scottish history" (though his career was surveyed in a Ronald Mavor play in the 1960s and in Christina Bewley's biography of 1981), Thomas Muir provides promising material for the dramatist. An advocate and a radical, Muir became a leading figure in the Society of the Friends of the People, founded in the wake of the French Revolution: his popularization of its ideas of liberty and universal suffrage was successful enough to alarm the government, and after a dubious trial for sedition, Muir was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. His subsequent escape from Australia to France, via many adventures in America, lies outside the scope of Peter Arnett's new play - the first part of a trilogy - but much colour and complexity remains. Muir is presented as a figure whose pursuit of liberty illumines a range of complicated conflicts - between self and public interest; legality and anarchy; national constitution and rights of individual man. In tragoe

these conflicts, Arnett's play develops into an elaborate investigation of the ethics of power and the nature of radicalism: as is suggested by occasional references to contemporary issues such as British supremacy in Ireland, or "the riot-torn cities of Britain", it is much more than only a historical or biographical drama.

Arnett's wider interests are dextrously incorporated in a structure which repeatedly juxtaposes past episodes of Muir's agitation and trial alongside present developments on his journey to Australia, the ship and its tyrannous naval hierarchy matching in microcosm political abuses in the state Muir failed to change. This alternation between ship and shore, and the cast's adroit doubling of parts, contribute to a progressive layering of political suggestion and resonance, and to a vision of oppression which moves the play beyond the naturalism of the early scenes. The increasing rapidity with which past and present are conflated creates in particular a terrific climax for the second act, in which Russell Hunter, playing both corrupt captain and despotic judge, high on the courtroom set, beats his rostrum in a rhythm echoed beneath him by Muir, stabbing out the words of his defence, and by the flogging on the fore-stage of an innocent Mate. Disappointingly, the last act provides an extended epilogue rather than a further crescendo. Dissipating tension in long soliloquies and apparent

irrelevancies, its slackness reinforces doubts about unevenness and indulgence in what has gone before. Though Michael Boyd's direction is in general firm, it might have been sharper in curtailing scenes which labour or diffuse their point and make for an evening unnecessarily long at three-and-three-quarter-hours.

Although sometimes over-extended, a genuine expansiveness of imagination is nevertheless strongly apparent in *Thomas Muir's Voyage to Australia*. Even the relative flatness of its last act can be partly excused as suggesting the resolution of some of Muir's conflicts in a calmer understanding of power, and in a political resolve if anything hardened by his disillusionment with revolutionary France. A memorable, if not rousing, climax is provided by Muir's determination to return to the struggle "empty-handed", and by his final anarchic dreams, gazing outward over the sea around Australia, and over the sea of faces in the audience. This conclusion is typical of Arnett's direct involvement of the spectators, who are earlier engaged as an onstage jury for trials, or as participants in a public meeting in which the cast infiltrate the auditorium to bowl abuse or advice at the stage. Audience attention is also firmly secured throughout by the excellence of the performances, with Kevin McManagie outstanding in the range of moods he creates for a perplexed protagonist.

## Playing with words

David Sexton

FERENC MOLNAR/P. G. WODEHOUSE  
The Play's the Thing  
Arts Theatre, Cambridge

This 1926 comedy is being presented as "by Molnar" in small letters, "adapted by P. G. Wodehouse" in rather large ones. But though included in Methuen's recent edition of four plays by Wodehouse, it is in fact a close translation of Molnar's original (which was performed at the National Theatre in 1984 in a version by Tom Stoppard under the title *Rough Crossing*). Wodehouse added some extra business with the servants and put the dialogue into his witty English, but the play's vigorous cynicism - so Hungarian, so un-Wodehousian - remains untouched.

A successful playwright, Sándor Turali, arrives at a castle on the Italian Riviera with his collaborator Minsky, a young composer, Adam, being young, Adam is in love with the prima donna of the company, indeed engaged to her. But she is soon overheard exchanging

compromising words with a licentious actor in the next room. Adam is agast - in this production his mouth hangs open for about a minute and a half. Turali resolves to master the situation by exercising his skill as a dramatist. Over the night he turns out a ludicrous play within the play; ostensibly translated from Sardou, which incorporates word for word the prima donna's conversation with her lover. This place - "A Tooth for a Tooth" - is then acted by them under humiliating direction from Turali, Adam is fooled into thinking that what he overheard was just rehearsal for it.

Hamlet wrote "The Mousetrap" to catch the conscience of the king; Turali's play aims only at the vindication of hypocrisy. *The Play's the Thing* is an arrogant demonstration of the playwright's ability to manipulate and out-do life. Stagnation is toyed with throughout: the first act with a discussion of how best to open an act (the characters introduce themselves); the second act tries out different endings; there are allusions to Pyramus and Thisbe; Like Turali, Molnar has the virtuoso's contempt for his audience.

To make this display of unalleviated tech-

nique enjoyable calls for very sharp performance, which it has not got in Cambridge. Leslie Randall is poised and snooty as Turali but Elizabeth Estensen fails to allure as the prima donna and her fiancé (Simon Green) looks subnormal rather than ingenuous. Bill Pryde's production does not move well until the last act. Wodehouse's delightful words are hastily spoken in an astonishing confusion of accents, and the set and costume are heavily in the repertory de luxe style. Molnar suggested that the teatime about acting could be brought about by a very informal performance "with a stage, or even a curtain, in a corner of a salon, with guests sitting haphazardly around". It might be worth trying. This production is too cumbersome, too much an affair of monocles, cigarette-holders and supposed 1920s charm, to bring out the piece's interest. It has been put through the rep processor; reviewing it is like reviewing a bag of crisps.

Wodehouse: *Four Plays* (318pp: Methuen, £3.95, 0 413 33030 2) contains the texts of *The Play's the Thing*, *Good Morning, Bill*, *Leave it to the Panini*, and *Come On, Jenny*.

# COMMENTARY

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## Messengers of freedom

### Josef Škvorecký

MIKE ZWERIN  
*La Tristesse de Saint Louis: Swing under the Nazis*  
 197pp. Quartet. £13.95.  
 07043 2420 2  
 LEO FEIGIN (Editor)  
*Russian Jazz: New identity*  
 217pp. Quartet. £12.95.  
 07043 25063

After reading a manuscript chapter of *La Tristesse de Saint Louis* that was particularly Laurence Sternian, Mike Zwerin's publisher advised him: "Facts! Stick to the facts. Stop contemplating your navel." This may not have been such bad advice. It is not so much a matter of the difficulty of finding out from his book who played third trumpet with Ernst Van't Hoff's band in Berlin in 1941, as that Zwerin's subtitle, "Swing under the Nazis", suggests a historical approach – if not exactly a history, then a reasonably well-researched historical essay. Zwerin, however, chose what he calls a "dramatic" approach; his book is not just about swing under the Nazis but also – and very much so – about how Mike Zwerin gathered information about swing under the Nazis. The method is supposed to involve the reader, along with Zwerin, in a process of discovery.

The trouble is that not many readers will pick up the volume in order to learn about its author's ordeal. This book treats us to impressive descriptions of the mood of German *Autobahnen*, to an account of Mrs Zwerin's mini-conflicts with French gendarmes, to a lengthy and not very informed discussion of South Africa, to some chic gibes at Reagan and many other irrelevances.

But if one sets aside the Stornoran escapades there remains much that is interesting, even remarkable. The long essay on Django Reinhardt is superb poetical journalism which brings that genius to life much better than a pedantic historical dissertation would. Many a

gypsy, we learn, tried to save himself in the camps by claiming to be Django Reinhardt. After the war, a survivor who believed he had known the real Django in his camp, where the musician died, walked into a Parisian café to confront a "phony" Django working there. But the survivor had an ear for music, and five minutes of listening to the "imposter" convinced him that it had been the poor character in the camp who had lied. Quite a few such stories enrich the essay on Django, which is written with insight, love, admiration and an understanding of the music.

Whenever Zwerin sticks to his subject, his anecdotes are fascinating and revealing. The German fighter pilot who used to switch on the BBC as soon as he crossed the Channel, "hoping to catch a few bars of Glenn Miller before bombing the antenna"; Ernst Hollerhagen, a jazz musician, raising his right arm in the Aryae salute in the Schumann Café and greeting his friends "Heil, Benny!"; Hans Jung, a German aficionado, christening his newborn son Lester Jung; Joachim-Ernst Berendt, later one of the most important theoreticians of jazz, ordered by his commanding officer to play swing music over the German army broadcasting service during the siege of Leningrad – such and similar bits and pieces lift out of oblivion many aspects of Zwerin's subject and help him avoid the monotony of other reminiscences by wartime buffs. "How many times can you read, 'Jazz saved my life'?" asks Zwerin and, indeed, someone with first hand experience like myself finds – not really with surprise – that things were quite similar all over occupied Europe. Like jazzmen in Stettin we, in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, were also challenged not to "stand up to solo"; like the Polish aficionados in Warsaw we, too, would paste red-and-black labels with "Horst Wessel Lied" or some such kosher music over the black and gold labels of our Brunswick; like Delauney in Paris we changed the names of American pieces and musicians to innocent-sounding Czech inventions; like youngsters in Frankfurt we would put a guard at the entrance to the pub where we were indulging in "Negermusik" to warn us of the approach of German police. Zwerin amply documents this reverse side of totalitarian uniformity.

It seems to me, however, that he is sometimes a bit too harsh, too instinctively suspicious of the purity of motives of the German jazz-buffs when he contemplates even such legendary figures as Schulz-Koebe, the Luftwaffe officer who, in occupied Paris, made friends with "lower race" (ie, black) jazzmen and published a kind of *sanitized jazz-bulletin*, not to mention the police officers who covered up for the sins of careless jazz lovers. There is an echo, even though a faint one, of Hemingway's military judges in *A Farewell to Arms* who "had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stern justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it". A Gestapo officer like Heinz Baldau, asked probably much more than an outsider can imagine when he let off a man whom he had caught listening to British radio (ao offence punishable with death in Hitler's Germany; astickers attached to every wireless set warned) and whom he knew to be half-Jewish. Indeed, I see no reason why Zwerin should not feel sorry for the man's two brothers who fell on the front. In Nazi Germany it was impossible to dodge the draft, and while Fritz Weiss, the Jewish clarinetist of the Ghetto Swingers (he did play well; his clarinet can be heard on some recordings of the Emil Ludvik band), died in Auschwitz, his friend and colleague from the Ludvik band, the trombonist Paul, a German, died eventually on the Eastern front. The courageous bandleader kept them both in the band for as long as he possibly could to save them from fates that however seemingly dissimilar, ended identically. It is hard to blame young men who grew up in the aftermath of the nightmarish depression in Germany; and were under the constant bombardment of Dr Goebbels's anti-capitalist and socialist propaganda, for falling for the National Socialists. In fact, it is admirable that some of them, such as Schulz-Koebe, saw through the lie, and while they stayed in the army (what else could they do short of suicide?) were constantly, and with considerable risk, breaking the rules.

But Zwerin probably understands this and may be making too much of what appears to

me as an ambiguity in his presentation of the German jazzmen. In spite of his digressions (which are not nearly as interesting as, for instance, the story of George Scott, a black bandleader who survived playing swing in wartime Warsaw), his book is a treasure of information, affection and understanding. It exudes genuine love for the music which created a brotherhood beyond nationality and race and whose triumph throughout the world remains – in spite of a wealth of various explanations – a mystery. A history of swing under the Nazis, however, remains to be written.

If I may, let me correct one irritating and stubbornly reappearing mistake. The statement "When I hear the word culture I reach for my gun" has been variously ascribed to Goebbels, Göring, even to Hitler himself. Mike Zwerin correctly attributes it to the leading Nazi playwright Hanns (oot Hans) Johst; however, it was not Johst's casual remark but a line from his drama *Schlegeler*, where it reads: "Wenn ich das Wort Kultur höre, da setz ich meine Browning" (When I hear the word culture, I loose the safety-catch of my Browning).

Which could be a fitting characterization of the actions of the Soviet cultural bureaucracy, in spite of whose unceasing efforts artists of various nationalities living under Soviet rule have managed to create works of art. The least known – is the West – of such miracles is the subject of Leo Feigin's critical anthology *Russian Jazz: New identity*, a collection of fifteen essays by American, British, East German, Romanian, Russian and West German authors telling the story of developments in the 1970s and 80s not covered by Frederick S. Starr's *Red and Hot: The fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union* (1983). Some of the pieces are critical examinations of the performances and recordings of the Ganelin Trio and of other Soviet free jazz innovators; valuable as they are, they naturally make sense only if you have a knowledge of the records; a knowledge fortunately obtainable, since nearly everything in the new Soviet jazz that is worth listening to is available from Leo Records, a London-based company operated by the editor of this anthology.

The story of New Jazz in the land of the Soviets is only a variation of the story of jazz of any type in Russia. As with everything that is new to the Soviet Union, the music is first subjected to attempts at discrediting and crushing it under slogans such as the one from a Stalinist poster which Feigin quotes: "Today he plays jazz and tomorrow he'll betray his country!" When the music proves hard to kill, it becomes grudgingly tolerated. Finally, after it has attracted attention in the West, it is cautiously exported and used as proof of artistic freedom in the Soviet Union, and as a source of hard currency for the state. Thanks to the superhuman gullibility of so many Westerners the resulting fictional state of affairs is sometimes accepted as real. When Feigin endeavours to convince the *Village Voice* jazz critic Gary Giddelos of the artistic merits of the Ganelin Trio, the guru asks (with a logic that is perfectly valid to the West): "If they are such good musicians, why doesn't Melodiya [the official Soviet state record company] release their records?" "Very seldom in my life," writes Feigin, "had I felt so tired." On another occasion Graham Lock asks Vyacheslav Ganelin whether his music is really "a cry for freedom", and, naturally, Ganelin's answer is evasive. Leo Feigin comments: "With one unguarded answer [Ganelin] could forfeit all his chances of future performances abroad" – but this fact of Soviet reality, apparently escapes the British journalist.

Perhaps the inability to distinguish between old-fashioned authoritarianism, which today exists only in a handful of scared small states in the Third World, and modern totalitarianism, has something to do with this. After leagthy explanations of the nature of Czech totalitarian *Realizatsionism* and of my status as a banned and blacklisted writer who was stripped of his citizenship and proclaimed an enemy of the state, my wide-eyed American hostesses have often asked me: innocently? mechanically? "Have you ever been back?" Why not? Their writer friends from Guatemala, also political exiles, go back every other year to reassure themselves that things are getting worse.

useful, not perhaps for the musicologist but for the person who wants to study the human Soviet-orbit art of writing between the lines. The East German critic Bert Noglik's account of a few days with that day's New Jazzmeo, and the Romanian Virgil Mihailis' "A 1984 Panorama of Soviet Jazz". "What we learn [about Soviet jazz] is often by chance," writes Noglik, because "the country it loves" Soviet readers would chuckle over this statement. The country is vast, but not vast enough to prevent the KGB from keeping track of what's going on to every remotest village beyond the Polar Circle. Similarly, Mihailis announces: "The most important Soviet contribution to the advancement of jazz... [is] wonderfully documented by Leo Records." To appreciate this, the reader only has to realize that the top jazz artists of a country which put enormous financial resources at the disposal of its conformist performers had to travel for a poor Russian émigré in England, who from private savings and by mortgaging his house financed a tiny shoe-string business called Leo Records, banned from import to Russia.

The book also includes musical travellers by Graham King, Hans Kumpf and Larry Ochs (of the Saxophone Quartet from Berkeley, California) that contain many revealing social and non-musical insights into Soviet life. Graham King finds Sergey Kuryokhin, who may well be one of the most innovative contemporary jazz pianists, in a state of shock after a concert in Leningrad in 1982. Why? Because the only free-jazz concert to be held in years has just finished and nobody knows whether there will be another one in Kuryokhin's lifetime. This one was much too successful. An unnamed "father" of Soviet jazz critics gives an interview to Ochs at night in a car parked in an empty square for fear of bugged rooms. Ochs, because of this and other experiences, feels a "presence" throughout his sojourn in the Soviet Union. "I felt like I was back in eighth grade, being a rebellious kid," writes Ochs. Well, in some respects he does seem to be an eighth-grader: "What really has to happen in both countries [ie, both in the United States and in the Soviet Union] is that the people have to take over." This is too much for me: how else can the people take over except by having a democratic government with regularly held elections giving the voters several choices? But that is what one of the above-named countries already has. It is an imperfect system, but then only human things are perfect.

The last essay in Leo Feigin's book is a touching account of the struggles he has had to face, a man who may well have saved Soviet New Jazz from obscurity and eventually from oblivion. Again, it is a story of paradox. Although the Soviet State Copyright Agency (VAAP), which is a monopoly, operates for all practical purposes, as a censor, both the PRS (Performing Right Society) and the MCPS (Mechanical Copyright Protection Society) in Great Britain accept VAAP as the collective member and demand that Leo Records pay royalties through them to VAAP. An absurd situation developed: Andrey Vapitrov, a New Jazz saxophonist, was sentenced to two years in prison, Leo Records issued an LP with his music, and the MCPS, under threats of taking its owner to court, demanded that their payments be sent to VAAP in Moscow. Since Vapitrov, as do all Soviet prisoners, had to pay for his upkeep in the camp, VAAP would confiscate any money sent to them for Vapitrov. In other words, British bureaucrats asked Feigin to help finance the Gulag. In Czech this is called *kapitál*. I don't think I have to explain the etymology of this word.

The authors of the evaluative essays have words of highest praise for the new Soviet jazzmen. "They are in advance of all music – East and West together," says the British journalist Graham King. And Leo Feigin marvels that "Russian Jazz will be the jazz of the future and himself". According to Fred Starr, the Russian New Jazz is "Kantian in character, it begins with the assumption of absolute freedom, invites the artist to create his or her own categories and forms, and then challenges him or her to use them as a new language of expression". After having heard some of the recordings, I tend to agree.

## On the treadmill

### Miranda Seymour

EVA FIGES  
*The Seven Ages*  
 186pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.  
 041118743

Past, present and future merge in the contours of an unremarkable landscape. Women and children huddle in their tents around the perimeter fence of a disused airfield, empty at night as a dead island. Beyond the fence rises the mound of an old harrow where Edwin the warlord lies buried. The darkness becomes an echo chamber of ancient voices, speaking to the lonely woman who has come to live in a cottage beside Greenham Common.

I suppose I will get used to being alone here at night. The dark silence sucking me in. Once I have put up some curtains I can shut it off in a normal fashion. It is as if I am in a room for infinity, but now I am fully conscious of the night sky rising above my head, lifting my heart with it in something like awe. And the dark silence that surrounds me is full of possibility.

Hunting in its lush, quasi-poetic evocations of the passing of time and the shifting of seasons, *The Seven Ages* is nevertheless a disappointment, coming from a writer who is known for her subtlety, craftsmanship and wit. *Light, Waking and Nelly's Version* are all in their different ways remarkable books, ambitious, intelligent and technically brilliant.

Under her other hat, as a social historian of feminist sympathies, Eva Figes has written a stimulating study of the subjugation of women and a sound critical book on early women novelists. Here, the two approaches are combined somewhat shakily in a work which shifts between presenting a view of history through women's eyes – or rather, from between women's legs, with childbirth as the much-lamented source of their most inescapable torment – and a very upmarket historical saga. There are moments when the lyrical language which Figes employed to such memorable effect in *Light and Waking* lifts the book on to a superior plane; there is none of the devastating irony and black wit of *Nelly's Version*.

To cover a time-span of a thousand years in less than 200 pages is not easy. Figes approaches a seemingly impossible task by focusing on childbirth as a relentless tread-

wheel of pain. The unnecessary suffering of women is her theme. The reader's vicarious suffering rapidly becomes an act of suffering. Primitive methods of midwifery are described with an almost obsessive concern for detail: They forgot to remove the eaglestone tied to her thigh to draw out the child, and the womb was drawn out after. By the time they found out their mistake it was too late, and though they say her on hot coals, hoping the foul smell of burning rags and feathers would drive it back up, and anointed her burning vulva with oil of thyme after pushing her organs back in, and spilled water in which mallow and hollyhock had been boiled, they could not hide from themselves or the whimpering mother that things looked bad.

They certainly do, but Morlow gets by with a plaster of hemlock and pitch to bind up her womb. Her great-granddaughter Judith – the chronology is far from easy to follow – tries to terminate one of her innumerable pregnancies with a concoction of pennyroyal, furze, laurel leaves and celery, followed by honeyed tugin roots and acorns. On another occasion, she tries, bishop's weed, dittany, catmint, fennel and hyssop roots. Is this endless cataloguing of obscure herbs really necessary to make the relatively simple point that life before modern contraceptives was as dangerous to perpetuate as to terminate? Herbal lore is a fascinating subject, but de the receipts of medieval midwives and abortionists add anything beyond curiosity value to the book? I think not.

A more serious flaw in *The Seven Ages* is its uncertain style. While the modern sections are fluent and assured, the historical narrative frequently lapses into Old English prose, liberally laced with clinking mead-cups, right royal marriages and groaning tables. Figes is not a writer one wants to find talking about "Blanche with the untorn hair, with her cool fingers and smother young brow and the clear grey eyes that looked at him so winningly". Nor, it has to be said, can she be rated too highly here as a social historian. There is little merit in passing on such homely truths as that fainting was a "not uncommon occurrence in those [Victorian] days, when ladies wore so much clothing and were laced into stays".

The message – women's stoic courage in the face of an ill-informed and staunchly rescholarly medical profession – is clearly delivered. The book is an entertaining but faintly unsatisfactory oddity, well below the author's usual standard.

## Haunts of frumps

### Patricia Craig

CHRISTINA STEAD  
*Ocean of Story: The uncollected stories of Christina Stead*  
 552pp. Viking. £12.95.  
 067089069

"No doubt because I was brought up by a naturalist, I have always felt an irresistible urge to paint true pictures of society as I have seen it"; so wrote Christina Stead in 1961, commenting on the method that produced such splendid novels as *Lecky Fox: Her Luck and For Love Alone*. It is a catch-all, detached and anecdotal method, with innumerable aspects of many lives being brought under scrutiny, and else a rigorous one: with this author, you're aware of an absolute distaste for such facile story-tellers' expedients as whimsy, frippery or surface charm. Stead's reader is homed, not wooed; her narratives unfold in a rather grim, purposeful and highly wrought manner, with the emphasis on self-definition (and how it's bound up with self-deception: her characters rarely see themselves as the author sees them), and on the social conditions prevailing in each particular location. (Stead's rootlessness has often been commented on: she began and ended in Australia, but spent the greater part of her life in English, European and American cities.) Above all, vigour and largeness of scale make her an author to be revered.

*Ocean of Story* – which brings together about twenty-five stories, and a number of odds and ends – isn't, however, a collection in which Stead's strengths are greatly in evidence; the writer one of the pieces included here read like trial runs (some, indeed, turn up to slightly different versions elsewhere, like the one about a rich young Australian alcoholic immobilized on a ship bound for England, and the girl who looks after her: this arrangement is mentioned in passing by the heroine of *For Love Alone*, who's been the makeshift attendant).

In one case, we get both a fictional and a non-fictional portrait of the same character: an expatriate American Pornodrinker and raconteur who noses out the good listener in every gathering. One story peters out in a disarming author's note: "And so on. Don't know."

Stead's generally serviceable prose style has, in some of these uncollected stories, become deadpan to the point of faux-naivety: "Peter, a lover, is dead now." Some show uncertainty over the question of where to start and stop; one – "Life is Difficult" – gets round that problem by opening with its heroine as a small child, and simply continuing until, in due course, her funeral takes place. Hers is one of the many lives (in Stead's work) lived drably and out-of-truth. These stories are full of philanderers, ne'er-do-well nephews, frauds, malingers, miseries in foreign hotels, irregular liaisons, boarding-houses, haunts of frumps, long-married couples doggedly attributing boringness to one another. The habit of mind these characters have in common is to be aggrieved. They are all desperately articulate when it comes to their annoyances.

The stories in the opening section of the book are set in Edwardian Sydney – "The Old School" contains pupils in sprigged dresses and Norfolk suits – but were not in fact written until the 1970s and later (we learn from a useful afterword by R. G. Geering). Other groups bring together episodes from Stead's sojourns in pre- or post-war Paris, New York, West Hampstead, and elsewhere. There is an overtly autobiographical section at the end. None of this is without interest, but the book is stuffed with accounts of odd, random behaviour and pointless recollections which produce in the end a somewhat arid feeling. The author's criticisms of the social and sexual arrangements of the mid-century are presented more cogently in her novels.

This year's Sinclair Prize has been awarded to Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye for her novel *Coming to Birth*, which will be published in June and reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

## Beirut bloodlines

### Robert Irwin

HANAN AL-SHAHYKH  
*The Story of Zahra*  
 186pp. Quartet. £8.95.  
 07043 25462

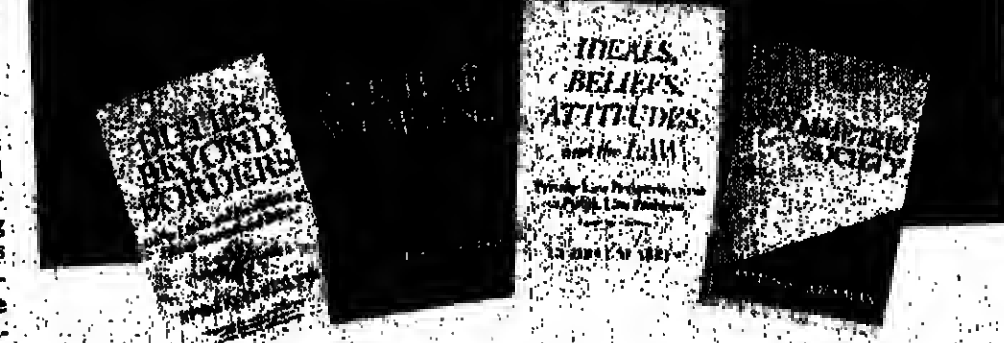
Zahra's story begins in Beirut before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war and ends while that war is still in its early stages. Zahra is not one of those rich and cultured Lebanese who can look back with nostalgia to the *douceur de vivre* before 1975. She is a member of the Shia "minority" in the Lebanon (actually the most numerous though least privileged denomination within the country). Yet Zahra can find little to identify with in her own community. While her uncle, Hisham, took part in a 1961 plot to overthrow what he perceived to be the oppressive structures of the old Lebanese regime, Zahra finds herself to be oppressed by her own family and her own community – by the men in particular. Her father is a braggart and a wife-beater; her brother is over-fond of his wife; her first lover is lascivious and unrepentant; her husband is materially and culturally impoverished and his propitiously named "sons" are "snails" trailing creeping over Zahra's body. She, for her part, shares the men's perception of her as unattractive, and she is acutely conscious of the acne which spreads over her face and shoulders. Passivity alternates with hysteria and hallucinations. She looks herself in the bathroom and, alone with her spots and her misery, broods on such matters as bloody sheets, abortions and Islam. Rarely can the family life of Islam have been portrayed in such an unattractive light.

In a life of such relentless bleakness, the outbreak of war in the Lebanon at first brings

some sort of relief to Zahra. The sound of gunfire reassuringly sends her to sleep and the enforced curfew makes her family huddle together in the flat, as Zahra used to huddle on her own in the bathroom. Her wastrel brother, Ahmed, also finds fulfilment of a sort in joining a gun-toting, hash-smoking militia group. He has lost nothing in the passing of the old Lebanon. The new order has a lot to offer in the way of loot and rhetoric. For Zahra it is also the case that the war has a levelling effect, raising everyone else's misery to the same pitch as her own. "Even the beautiful society women we saw in the society pages of the magazines were in the same fix, hiding in some corner of their elegant homes..." As the fighting continues and intensifies, Zahra's depression returns and she looks back with nostalgia to a sunny childhood with Ahmed. But there is little or nothing in the first half of the novel to back up this suggestion of childhood happiness. It is uncertain whether we are dealing with an unreliable narrator or Zahra or Hanan al-Shaykh.

Zahra begins to make regular visits to a man with a gun on a roof, and they make love. According to the blurb, "Zahra sets herself a task: to use her body to divert a sniper from his terrible duties." This would have been a laudable act of self-sacrifice, but Zahra's visits to the young "god of death" on the roof seem, in fact, to be motivated by less noble and more mysterious forces. It is never clear, either, that the man is a sniper or that Zahra is an entirely reliable narrator of her own story. The blurb concludes, "Out of terror there emerges a strange fulfillment of her search for ecstasy, and a dream of how life could be should the war ever finish." The book's bleak hopelessness is more consistent than that, and its conclusion offers no fulfilment of any kind, but "promises only of monsoons".

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# Away from the family

Hanif Kureishi

JOSEPH OLSHAN  
Clara's Heart  
312pp. Cape. £9.95.  
0224 023594

When David's parents' marriage smashes up, they send their son to a psychologist to be cured of confusion. At the psychologist's David secretly scissored from learned books scientific drawings of the female genitals and "acrobatic" pictures to use, in conjunction with a vacuum cleaner, as a sex aid. Meanwhile the Jamaican maid Clara, perfect mother and fallen angel, is concealed in a closet wondering at this new use of her Electrolux. But unlike David's brittle, somewhat shadowy parents, Clara understands everything, having lived deeply. This is her story too. She has a secret past which is tragic.

Clara was brought from Jamaica by Leona, David's unhappy, withdrawn mother, after the death of Leona's baby daughter. Soon the affluent parents are too preoccupied to care for or love David. While Clara adores him, Leona senses, in the American way, for peace, meaning and understanding by taking the psychic valium of astrology and attempting to part company with her pale body in astral projection. She is in such selfish despair she is reduced to reading Edgar Cayce. Eventually she flees to California with her guru. This frees David and Clara, away from the parents' conventional world of adultery, divorce and lust, to inhabit a delicious loving privacy. They speak in patois, which David is so good at he can phone Clara and perfectly imitate her friend Blossom Chatelaine. Unfortunately this

skill gets him sent to the psychologist. And despite being Jewish, David accompanies Clara to church and takes communion. Clara is furious: "But if ya parents found out, they'd sblit up themselves!"

With Clara and her Jamaican hairdresser friends, he gets involved in voodoo, the burning of body-shaped candles, visits to gypsies, the abuse of soap-opera stars on the subway and there is a pelvic bawdy dance called "Lift-up". "Wait for Jesus, wait for me!" cries Clara, just before a vicious physical fight between her and her old mysterious enemy Dora, who is the key to Clara's past. Jolted by the quite natural desire to go through other people's bedrooms and read their locked-away private letters, David begins to find out about Clara, her dead son, Dora, and why she is a fallen angel.

In giving us a detailed child's-eye view of the world, *Clara's Heart* occupies similar territory to *The Catcher in the Rye* without that book's vim or voice. Especially at the beginning, Olshan's point of view is uncertain; he can't pull his story into focus. The book is politically insular and unambitious, like most recent American writing, which deals with the ins-and-outs of families and is reluctant to relate private affairs to public ones or tangle with larger issues and themes. Why don't American writers tell us what it is like to be a world power?

Olshan's achievement is to have created a separate and entirely believable world, carefully, comically and humanely drawn without literary self-consciousness. It is held together by much tension and contains many excellent recognizable scenes and embarrassments. *Clara's Heart* is successful on its own terms, as one of those novels that illustrate Gide's resonant phrase: "Families I hate you." It is a fine debut.

# Now for the news

Lachlan Mackinnon

PATRICIA LEWIS POTEAT  
Walker Percy and the Old Modern Age:  
Reflections on language, argument, and the telling of stories.  
177pp. Louisiana State University Press.  
08071 11872  
WALKER PERCY  
The Moviegoer  
176pp. Paperback, £2.50. 0 586 06414 1  
The Last Gentleman  
352pp. Paperback, £2.95. 0 586 06413 3  
The Second Coming  
334pp. Paperback, £2.95. 0 586 06412 5  
Granada.

Walker Percy's book of essays *The Message in the Bottle* (1975) is the central concern of Patricia Lewis Poteat's study, *Walker Percy and the Old Modern Age*. She observes the curious fissure, in Percy's theoretical writings on language, between accounts of particular people in particular predicaments and his desire for a "radical science" of man as symbol-using animal. In the latter mode, Percy reveals how much his abstract thought is influenced by behaviourism and empiricism, the wish to treat man from a Martinian perspective (as he puts it) which is, Poteat argues, that of the Cartesian cogito.

Two thinkers, Hannah Arendt and Michael Polanyi, stand behind Poteat's argument, which is that those things philosophy as practised in the Cartesian tradition omits are what is most important to man - she exploits tellingly the novel in which Kierkegaard imagined Hegel living outside the castle of his system. Knowledge of these things is what Percy calls "news" as opposed to "island knowledge", the categories into which his Imaginary gateway divides the messages washed up on the beach. The latter is essentially scientific, applicable by anyone anywhere; while the former addresses the castaway in his singularity. The archetypal "news" is the Christian gospel, which Poteat insists must be regarded primarily as a story ("Unto us a child is born") rather than a set of axioms. Storytelling lets the thinker deal with what it is to be a particular person in a particular place. Percy's imagination is haunted by the Christian image of man as a wanderer in a

strange world, and his concern as storyteller is to bring together the transcendent anagallis of pure thought and the immanent actuality of our incarnate condition in the body Descartes viewed as an animated corpse. This concern, Poteat argues, is or ought to be our common concern, because Cartesian dualism and the glamour of mathematics are deeply woven into the ways we habitually and wrongly think.

At his most arid, Percy the theoretician produces diagrams, usually triangular, to describe our use of symbols to mediate and share experience. These diagrams, and their accompanying vocabulary, aspire to the condition of mathematics. Poteat fails, perhaps, to stress how unreadable these passages are, but she notes acutely that they depend on precisely the presuppositions they and the novels intend to undermine. Percy is the victim of the late modern age as well as its chronicler, and his writing is impotent entirely to free itself from what it fears. The unreadability is essentially antisocial; Poteat insists that story-telling is "convivial", and relates it to Arendt's conception of the Greek polis as offering a shared public realm in which man might most fully disclose his being. For Arendt, for Poteat, and in principle for Percy, the real is what can be shared, a common world.

Enlightened by this thought-provoking essay in cultural criticism, it is a pleasure to turn to the three novels now reissued in paperback (*The Moviegoer*, *The Last Gentleman* and *The Second Coming*). Poteat clarifies and justifies the tendentiousness which can mar Percy's work; though her readings do insufficient justice to the novels' fullness. *The Second Coming*, for instance, she regards as the second coming of Will Barrett, but she does not consider the title's ominous echo of Yeats or the fact that at the novel's end Will feels he can have both "her and Him", Allah and Christ. The new life on which he embarks is a shared narrative, and in it Christ may be present, the Word be flesh. Will's crazed loathing of the world is redeemed by the humble faith and immersion he finds. Percy's triumph is to make us believe that this adventive expectation of "news" is what Christianity might mean now, while Poteat's achievement is to show the intellectual respectability of Percy's novels as explorations of what the lack of shared faith means for our sense of ourselves.

# Familiar fetishes

John Melmoth

PETER DICKINSON  
Tefuga  
256pp. Bodley Head. £9.95.  
0170 308913  
NICHOLAS BEST  
Tennis and the Mass  
176pp. Hutchinson. £8.95.  
009 1637700

Given Peter Dickinson's penchant for structural obliquity, it is scarcely surprising that *Tefuga* is not simply about colonial life in Northern Nigeria in the 1920s but is about making a film in the 1980s about colonial life in Northern Nigeria in the 1920s. Miss Tressider, the star, was only persuaded to come to "fucking awful Africa" by a "terrific" script, but remains jaundiced and puzzled:

How did you sell it to them? It isn't the Raj, is it? No howdahs or durbars or tiger shoots, just three or four people sweating their lives away in a sinking jungle slum. By no means mass audience.

This is disingenuous, though. Tales from the Dark Continent trade as a matter of course in the nastiness of the fauna, the hideousness of the bacillae lurking in every stagnant pool and the unspeakable slob and depravity of the locals. Africans confront their colonial masters across gulfs of mutual incomprehension to the novelist's and cinematographer's benefit if not their own.

Nigel Jackland, a successful television journalist, is making a film about his parents' life in the bush some sixty years earlier (as well as deriving an Oedipal frisson from sleeping with the actress who plays his mother, Betty). He begins by sounding a note of *bien pensant* cultural relativism: "The British tribe who ruled Nigeria for some sixty years practised rituals and revered fetishes as bizarre to me as those of any of the people they governed." Betty Jackland was remarkable precisely to the degree that she found the protocols of indirect rule, a heady fusion of the "Law of the Prophets and the Laws of Cricket", infinitely odder and more infuriating than the world view of the natives with whom she came into contact.

Betty's journal, like Margaret Millatt's memoir in *Death of a Unicorn*, suggests as untypical forcefulness and singleness of purpose - this in spite of the fact that her natural idiom is the "debuted" which Margaret made a living from satirizing. Her observations, for all that they are packaged in the patois of a pre-pubescent good sort - "Golly", "permish", "expedish", "ugsome" and "pull yourself together Bets" - are nevertheless generally reliable, based on a tolerance (even of the relaxed Tikawa sexual rites of passage) unusual for the period.

The received wisdom that it was impossible for a European ever really to know Africa encourages Dickinson to worry away at the sort of epistemological problem which so many of his novels give space to. (*Hindisighi*, for example, simultaneously indulged in and snuffed at that "fashionable fooling around with notions of truth and fiction, fun for some, tedious for most".) Where Betty comes into maximum conflict with her husband and the authorities in Kaduna is over their blithe solution to the ticklish problem of other minds - "Nobody knows what the African really thinks." She will not allow her curiosity to be emasculated in this way. She adds the weight of her obstinacy to the white man's burden - "women who meddle in administration aren't much better than Africans in shiny blue suits coming up from Lagos". Forming an alliance with the formidable Tikawa women, she brings their grievances to the attention of her boss's bosses. The women are only able to talk to her because she is not a white man and she responds to this notion of a sexual solidarity cutting across race and experience: "I am not a white man. . . I share more with this black savage who I'll probably never meet again than I do with dear Ted, who I'm going to spend the rest of my life with."

*Tefuga* argues that whereas the British emphasized probity above all other virtues, the Nigerians placed a premium on "generosity, spontaneity, boldness, bravery, personal authority". But unfortunately, it falls to dramatise this crucial discrepancy. Good as Dickin-

son is on the preoccupations of the governing class, his attempts to communicate the African side of things suffers in comparison. The natives are cowed or self-important, and profoundly alien. Even Elongo, once Betty's houseboy and now a force in post-independence politics, talks a mixture of Oxford philosophy and BBC announcerese. He could not seem weirder if he wore a grass skirt and a bone through his nose.

In Nicholas Best's contemporary Kenya, the older Africa hands, when not affecting the studied cool of the frontier - "A leopard . . . God, what a bore" - continue to bind on show the otherness of all those Africans who continue to clutter up the place. Where *Tefuga* is a touch self-congratulatory about its enlightened relativism, *Tennis and the Mass* organises very cultural reversals. The colonial world has been turned upside down. The novel opens with two African officials watching to abashed disbelief as a number of German tourists disport their naked adiposity in the sea - "A Pastoral people. One can't expect to change them overnight."

This tale of an innocent preparatory schoolmaster abroad in East Africa plainly invites comparisons with Waugh, and Best makes an early reference to *Black Mischief*. More generally, his Kenya is a literary landscape, haunted by the ghosts of Rider Haggard, Barnes Blixen and Elise the lioness. Nor is he slow to plug his own popular history, *Happ Valley*, in which the novel's cantal character, Martin Riddle, reads of the "lords and ladies, drug addicts and pioneers, adulterers and black sheep" who made Kenya what it was in the good old days, a place of "high altitude eccentricity" - "everyone drank or fornicated or was sent home in disgrace". Shades of *White Mischief* too.

The mythologizing has not ceased. The "alpine world" of the Aberdare mountains is a million miles from the "BBC Africa" of the game parks. The plains are roamed by new species of American anthropologist in search of tenure, waxing polysyllabic about Maai ethnoculture which the old stagers continue to regard as the mindless whimsy of a bunch of "ignorant bastards".

Best's Kenya is running down; its recent history is a process of decline from a more heroic age. Although it remains a place of casual beauty and everyday exoticism - a trip to the post office can involve encounters with gazelle grazing at the road's edge while a fish eagle hovers overhead and pelicans fly past - it is not the place it once was. The seigneurial blood-mindedness and eccentricity of the martinet (and martinettes) who originally ran the place are now surplus to requirements. The new pat is a businessman from Subitton on a short-term contract. Nor has the African escaped. In one epiphanic scene Martin witnesses a Maai lion dance, the warriors splendidly muscled, carrying war rattles and wearing leggings made from the fur of colobus monkeys, red ochre dreadlocks, head-dresses of black chicken feathers, tennis shoes and spectacles.

*Tennis and the Mass* is relaxed, deceptively effortless, written with wit and charm. It is also unflinching; severe; tart and occasionally bloodthirsty. Martin, who arrives a wet, goes home a man having shot an Impala for supper, and carried it back to camp with the blood-soaking flint his shirt. Having once wanted nothing more than a career in teaching, he returns to a drab and squalid UK seeking a commission in the Green Jackals, confident of his ability to command "a platoon of ex-borstal boys in the Crumlin Road".

As part of Caribbean Focus '86, a nine-month programme of cultural and educational events which began on March 5 at the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NQ, Soma Books have mounted a Caribbean Book Festival. The festival, which opened on May 1 and runs until June 30, features a wide range of books - with a particular emphasis on educational works - about or published in the Caribbean; a large selection of children's books; volumes of fiction and poetry; and some works by British writers. Further information and a full list is available on request from Mihnie Kurnia at the Commonwealth Institute. The bookshop is open from 10.00-5.30 Monday to Saturday, and 2.00-5.00 on Sundays.

TLS May 16 1986 GERMAN FICTION

# The Enlightenment betrayed

J. J. White

PETER SLOTERDIJK  
Der Zauberbaum: Die Entstehung der Psychoanalyse im Jahre 1785  
322pp. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. DM 358.00/\$221.6

The "magic tree" in the title of Peter Sloterdijk's first novel is the aim in the French village of Buzancy beneath which the Marquis de Puysegur, a pupil of the *magnétiseur* Franz Anton Mesmer, performed his feats of hypnosis in the last years before the Revolution. *Der Zauberbaum* is set in 1785, one year after Puysegur's discovery of the therapeutic advantages of "artificial somnambulism" (ie, hypnosis). It chronicles the journey of a Viennese doctor, the twenty-four-year-old Jan van Leyden, to Buzancy via Strasbourg, Paris and the Salpêtrière. Before he is brought face to face with Puysegur, van Leyden runs the gauntlet of an assortment of contemporary "originals": quacks, false rationalists, mesmerists and bizarre intellectuals of various orders.

In his *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (reviewed in the TLS of October 7, 1983), Sloterdijk advances the claim that the "discovery of the unconscious" customarily attributed to Sigmund Freud was in fact one of the greatest achievements of the Enlightenment. A century before Freud's pilgrimage to Paris to study under Charcot, the mesmerists were, according to Sloterdijk, achieving a breakthrough in the exploration of the unconscious, for all their hocus-pocus, marking the

beginnings of modern psychotherapy.

Sloterdijk describes his novel as an "epic essay in the philosophy of psychology", which suggests that it is a continuation, by other means, of the pamphleteering aspect of his best-selling *Kritik*, and, indeed, *Der Zauberbaum* bears many of the hallmarks of a highly artificial *roman à thèse*. From the initial, over-explicit list of characters and the author's pre-emptive prefatory remarks about the philosophical significance of his tale, to the various knowing recapitulations of the journey's underlying implications, the reader is continuously being invited to see characters and incidents as illustrative building-blocks in a historical allegory. When the hero is seduced, or possibly dreams he has been, by a Parisian matron, this is largely to allow him to prefigure Freud's ideas on the Oedipal. His encounter with a troupe of itinerant players becomes the starting-point for much theorizing about the nature of selfhood. And a later visit to the Palais Royal is merely the setting for one of those extended discussions with a variety of cynics which form such an important part of van Leyden's education.

Yet *Der Zauberbaum* contains many episodes and characters whose power extends well beyond their place in the grand scheme. There is, for instance, an encounter with the Strasbourg mesmerist LeBrasseur, who ingeniously uses a fetus, a skeleton and a climb to the top of Strasbourg Cathedral as props in his attempt to open van Leyden's eyes to the dawning new age; the madman in the Salpêtrière who thinks he is Louis XV, and ends up under the guillotine like his historical counterpart; and the de-

cadent Parisian "Sexualzyniker" Saint-Mal-baux. And although van Leyden remains a relatively colourless personality, he has a gift for the bold image, the aphoristic pronouncement and the grand vision.

In his philosophical treatise, Sloterdijk complains of reason's lack of vision. But his attempt there at finding some new bridge between philosophy and life, the grand taxonomy of "cynicisms" and panaceas, ranges from the procrustean to the embarrassingly quixotic. *Der Zauberbaum* is, by contrast, more successful, in that the author transfers some of his ideas to the youthful van Leyden and injects a measure of irony. Much that was overbearing when served up as an encyclopaedic diagnosis thereby acquires at least some plausibility. Yet the theme of the novel - of epoch-making discoveries in animal magnetism, far more revolutionary for an understanding of the modern self than the political events of the 1780s, gradually being betrayed by the collective cynicism and "enlightened false consciousness" that succeeded the Terror - remains unconvincing. That Puysegur, or even the nebulous van Leyden, could lay claim to being the father of psychoanalysis is merely an article of faith.

It may partly be history's fault that the story is one of misplaced hopes and unfulfilled potential. But having so impressively prepared the ground for an encounter between van Leyden and Puysegur, Sloterdijk does rather abuse the occasion as a pretext for a quasi-allegorical phantasmagoria about the betrayal of the Enlightenment, rather than exploit it to show the new discipline's therapeutic powers in action.

# Berlin ballad

Peter Graves

THORSTEN DECKER  
Die Bärtschaft  
160pp. Zürich: Ammann. DM21.  
325010561

Mark Twain may have declared that a German joke was no laughing matter, but the joke underlying the literary debut of Thorsten Decker, a twenty-eight-year-old from West Germany, is really rather a good one. He has taken Schiller's "Die Bärtschaft" (The Pledge), a ballad known to generations of German schoolchildren, and wittily adapted both its plot and its values to contemporary circumstances.

In Schiller's telling of Cicero's original, Damon, condemned to death by the tyrannical Dionysius, is given a three-day reprieve to witness his sister's wedding, on the understanding that, should he not come back within that period, the friend who has pledged himself as guarantor will die in his place. Various obstacles delay his return until, as he thinks, the deadline has passed, but, preferring death to dis honour, he presents himself for execution - just in time to save his friend. Moved by this mutual loyalty Dionysius spares them both.

In Becker's version Syracuse in the fourth century ac has become divided Berlin in the 1980s. The narrator, a young West German writer, makes the acquaintance of an East German stage-designer. In order that the latter may be allowed out of East Germany to take up a commission in Vienna, the West German agrees to act as collateral, committing himself to stay in the East permanently if his friend fails to return. Dionysius is played here by an urbane officer of the state security service, who arranges the deal, confident that events are ultimately under his control.

The tale is told with gusto and with numerous entertaining observations on life in East Germany. Although the narrator is favourably disposed towards that state, he grows increasingly desperate at the prospect of actually having to live there. He is spared this fate in the final pages, when his opposite number returns in the nick of time to prevent a frantic escape attempt in a stolen BMW.

The whole conception is of course entirely fanciful, although ironic humour spiked with touches of the surreal may be the most appropriate way of dealing with the absurdities of the Berlin Wall. The climate created by such a border, however, is not disguised by the lightness of Becker's narrative tone. Mistrust and manipulation abound: of the lofty virtues extolled in Schiller's ballad there is barely a trace. This is a memorable performance by Becker, but perhaps Mark Twain was right none the less.

# BITBURG IN MORAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

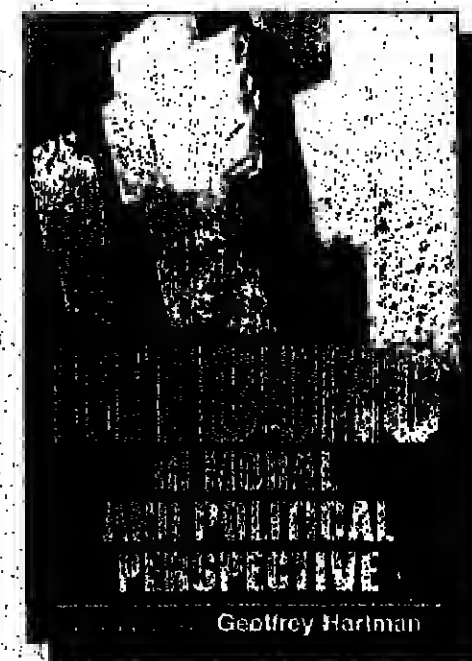
Edited with an Introduction by  
Geoffrey Hartman

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# Gloom the whole world over

Roland Littlewood

ARTHUR KLEINMAN and BYRON GOOD  
(Editors)  
*Culture and Depression: Studies in the anthropology and cross-cultural psychiatry of affect and disorder*  
535pp. University of California Press. £38.25.  
0520 054938

In 1953 the World Health Organization published *The African Mind in Health and Disease*, a monograph by J. C. Carothers, who was a British psychiatrist in Kenya. Carothers restated a commonplace of colonial psychiatry—that the African is not capable of becoming depressed because of the inferior development of his brain. An alternative image was of course that of the Noble Savage; in a state of nature without the cares and conventions of urban society, man did not become depressed. Depression was the consequence of responsibility, a sign of Western man's higher moral and social being, the price paid to nature by civilization. The available statistics of patients in colonial mental hospitals seemed to bear out the thesis, for the natives were seldom admitted with a depressive illness.

This is no longer true. Depressive illness is now diagnosed in societies of all types throughout the world and it responds to the same

pharmacological treatments which are effective in the West. Ethnocentric rationalizations apart, one of the reasons for its apparent rarity in the colonial period was that only violent patients were admitted to hospital, leaving depressed individuals to the traditional healers in the villages.

Is depression then universal? Some fundamental problems remain. Not all societies recognize and label the constellation of symptoms recognized in the West. "Depression" is simultaneously a word for an emotion experienced by all of us at some time in Britain, a symptom of various illnesses and the name of a particular psychiatric syndrome (for which there is evidence of non-specific biological changes). What are the connections between affect, symptom and syndrome? There are now numerous studies which demonstrate a link between significant events such as bereavement or loss of one's job and subsequent depressive illness. It is not clear whether this is so in societies which have not developed any detailed lay-psychological conception of an "internalized self" capable of experiencing a variety of mental states such as depression.

Classifications of emotion are culturally determined. Where we draw lines between anxiety, depression, tension and worry, others may not. Affects have their eras: the acedia of the medieval West with its connotations of moral sloth was displaced by melancholia and

later still by a more "psychologized" notion of depression, a major symptom of which was a sense of guilt and worthlessness. Illnesses also exist in particular settings: while Indians are concerned about the loss of semen and use this notion to articulate a variety of symptoms, contemporary Americans are particularly concerned about failure to achieve semen loss. A differentiated psychology is not a prerogative of the West, as numerous anthropologists studying indigenous psychologies have now demonstrated: rich affective lexica are available to the distressed individual in a variety of cultures.

The book under review, edited by two eminent practitioners of "the new cross-cultural psychiatry", establishes the groundwork by which we may start to answer two questions. Are "depressive" illness and affect universal? If they are not, how and why does a particular social structure cause these particular experiences to occur? All the contributors take into account Arthur Kleinman's fundamental assumption that the full range of local meanings must be explored before attempting cross-cultural comparisons. The dominant medical approach, however, has been to select out "depression" in a unitary Western culture, assume it is culturally invariant, and then use questionnaires based on translations from English in an attempt to determine its incidence elsewhere; such a Russian doll notion of psychiatric dis-

order presumes that various cultural states can be peeled away to reveal the "real" psychiatric core. *Culture and Depression* deals firmly with this clash of paradigms, one of which is based on a meaning-centred anthropology, the other on a traditional psychiatry. It explores the epistemological relationship between them. Although many of the contributions are based on detailed fieldwork, the collection is primarily a contribution to methodology, a prolegomenon to any future ethnopsychiatry.

The general conclusions are that emotions are not a single package of stated feeling, but complex personal and intersubjective experiences contingent on language, role and situation. There are universals, for emotions are not unique to each society and young children in different cultures manifest similar responses which it seems not unreasonable to gloss, for example, as grief or rage. How such universals are amplified, suppressed or conflated in different societies to produce different emotions remains to be demonstrated. These papers suggest that future work will probably be multidisciplinary, involving anthropologists and psychologists perhaps more than psychiatrists. They add up to the most sophisticated exercise yet done in comparative psychiatry. Given the style of the book's senior editor, it seems fair to point out that they are lucid and devoid of jargon.

If the term unconscious is replaced by "unspeoken" or "unconsidered", it can be seen that psychoanalysis is only one way of arriving at such conclusions, and indeed Stein himself quotes Martin Buber and his ideas of relationships permeated by grace. His central case-study of a chronic diabetic, given the pseudonym of Mr Wozzeck, is dedicated to the memory of Alban Berg. It is not necessary to accept the validity of psychoanalysis to be impressed by the arguments of the book.

For physicians, especially those in training, as for other professionals, and even perhaps for patients, it is often more difficult to learn from life or literature than from official discourse. I remember the case of an agoraphobic who after more than two years of unsuccessful treatment, left her house after a short therapeutic interview with a young doctor. She explained that when she had heard about his emotional problems, she thought "it would be add to them a sense of failure. Heister became what to Stein is a contradiction in terms, a humanistic behaviourist. Such may be the complicated dialectics of the healing process.

and diminish their patients' suffering (which is hard to contemplate) to mere physical pain by projecting their own unconscious conflicts and difficulties onto their relationships with the sick and especially the dying. If they recognize this frankly and bring it into the open through discussion with others they can use their emotional commitment to help their patients and themselves. They then acknowledge not only that patients are social and psychological beings but that they live in the same social worlds as themselves. This, Stein points out, is especially important in a society divided by status and into ethnic groups. Family practice in a United States inner-city hospital is often a combination of white, rich, fit, middle-class males in the prime of life treating poor, black or Hispanic, obese females, often prematurely aged. Paradoxically, as he also points out, this general situation creates particular problems for the exceptions: ethnic minorities treating ethnic minorities, or women treating women. They have to face not only individual emotions but stereotyped collective emotions (cultural countertransferences) individually felt.

devoted to the anxiety disorders, these quotations serve as reminders of how common the experience of anxiety is, and how many references to it may normally go unremarked. In a chapter on agoraphobia Goodwin suggests, in the words of Karl Menninger, that agoraphobia is struggling like fish on a hook, and it is salutary to be reminded how uncomprehending observers may be: "It is hard for a free fish to understand what is happening to a hooked one."

Inevitably there are difficulties with a book so wide-ranging. The most obvious is the risk of reducing complex matters to almost absurd levels of simplicity. Thus a synopsis is introduced here as "a space between nerve cells" with only minimal further elaboration. Relatively minor points are also occasionally over-emphasized. The section on the treatment of generalized anxiety disorder, for example, includes quite a long discussion of a curative method of slowing heart-rate by managing the carotid body, a practice infrequently recommended for anxiety, and rarely described in the literature. Controversial matters are also presented with surprising decisiveness. We are told that it is "possible to develop a phobia of anything whatsoever, a statement which, if we accept current theories of the evolution of anxiety, is most unlikely to be correct.

The high standard of objectivity with which Goodwin weighs up the evidence for and

## A doctor's dilemma

Ronald Frankenberg

HOWARD F. STEIN  
*The Psycho-Dynamics of Medical Practice: Unconscious factors in patient care*  
190pp. University of California Press. £14.50.  
0520 054806

There is a tacit acceptance in medical practice that physicians have particular feelings towards their patients. It emerges in conversation and relationships within their families, in their private and often unprintable jokes and in torrid romantic novels, but it is usually officially suppressed, even repressed. Despite the advent of behavioural science, medical schools rarely prepare their students systematically for the emotional shocks to come. I once saw an American medical student's assessment reduced by 10 per cent because a videotape revealed that he had confessed to a patient that he sometimes "felt like that" too. I was told that he had committed a severe breach of the scientific ethos of modern family medicine.

Howard Stein would emphatically not agree with this. He has worked for some years as a "behavioural science advisor" in family practice training. His psychoanalytical and anthropological education led him to notice the importance of countertransference to the outcome of treatment and he suggests that instead of ignoring their own feelings, doctors should use them to help cure their patients; he also felt that coming to terms with these feelings was a significant part of a doctor's maturity. In the context of mechanistic philosophy, high technology, fear of law-suits and the elevated status ascribed to doctors in America, Stein's ideas are vitally important, as they may also be, given some current trends, in British medicine. Much of his approach originated in Britain in the work of Michael Balint and Lily Pincus at the Tavistock Institute.

He presents his arguments in two ways, as Freud did, as both theoretical principles and vignettes—case studies—in which he explains how he and his colleagues learned from their mistakes. His key argument is that physicians defend themselves from their own discomfort

## Complex thoughts made simple

Gillian Butler

D. W. GOODWIN  
*Anxiety*  
234pp. Oxford University Press. £12.50.  
0 19 503665 4

In some ways this is a bold book. Great expertise is needed to evaluate, as D. W. Goodwin does, what is happening in fields as different as biochemistry and psychoanalysis, and to detail both the workings of single brain cells and the diverse methods of treatment practised by therapists.

Professor Goodwin has a talent for explaining things clearly and memorably. With apparent ease he gives us the basic terminology, such as is necessary, for instance, for understanding the rudiments of neurochemical transmission. He is then in a position to tell the story of the discovery of endorphins: within a few pages he takes us from a simple description of the brain (as an object weighing two-and-a-half pounds, which is "the organ of reason, emotion and perception") to the discovery of morphine-like substances inside it. The story is excitingly told.

His account of philosophical and psychological developments is equally skilful, and the scene is set for each chapter by well-chosen quotations from an interesting range of sources. In the last part of the book, which is

# From the temple of Apollo

Alan Young

YVES ABRIOUX  
*Ian Hamilton Finlay: A visual primer*  
246pp. Edinburgh: Reaktion. £24.  
0948462 000

In his "visual primer" to the art of Ian Hamilton Finlay, Yves Abrioux has allocated most of the available space to reproductions of Finlay's work. Analytic text takes up fewer than forty pages of the book's 246 pages. This well-selected and finely printed presentation—much of it in colour—of poems, short stories, and photographs of non-printed material is by far the fullest, most attractive, and most persuasive account given to date of Finlay's many-faceted achievement.

Abrioux makes two important claims for Finlay's work. The first, an explicit one, is that the work has "overall coherence". The second, implicit to every sentence of the compressed text, is that Finlay is a deeply serious artist of international stature. Justification of this second claim is dependent upon the truth of the first—the existence of a serious unifying vision in Finlay's art.

Viewing them as independent phenomena—which is how most general readers of poetry will have been forced to view them before the arrival of this book—Finlay's activities and poem-objects may have often seemed lightweight and playfully eccentric exercises in the styles of neo-modernism. Their formal variety makes an apparently odd assortment: Finlay's reaction since 1966 of a poet's garden at Stonypath (now Little Sparta) in the hills west of Edinburgh (the Athens of the North); this gar-

den filled at first with fishing-boat names and numbers and then with forms relating to modern weaponry and the machines of modern warfare, including aircraft-carriers scaled down to become bird-tables, and fighter aircraft modelled in stone; the creation of a Garden Temple there, dedicated to "Apollo—his Music, his Missiles, his Muses"; Finlay's much publicized disputes with the Strathclyde Region and the Scottish Arts Council, leading to the "First Battle of Little Sparta" in 1983, one skirmish in a campaign which continually rumbles and flares, with little sign of eventual peace; a constant flow from Finlay and his collaborators of toys and models, poem-prints, books and booklets of varied shape and size, cards and calendars, and many non-printed works including inscriptions and emblems, ponds and small gardens within the great garden, constructions of wood, glass, stone, metal or neon, designs and blueprints for private and public gardens and townscapes; and much more. All these are proof of Finlay's rich and apparently inexhaustible inventiveness. Their consistently beautiful quality testifies to his professionalism and his capacity to inspire his collaborating artists to appropriately fine crafting. But how can this profusion of art-objects and events be regarded as having any genuine coherence or lasting importance?

Abrioux's book is the most representative selection from Finlay's work ever brought together and shows it to be self-evidently the creation of a serious artist. Inevitably, no book can hope to reproduce all Finlay's kinetic or textual effects. Nor can it do more than suggest the character and scale of some of the projects. A book cannot capture the unpredictable delights of turning the split pages of *Canal Game* (1967), for example, or the strange ex-

perience of wandering through a grove of trees with plinths inscribed to Rousseau or Robespierre. But so many individual pieces or small limited editions have quickly gone out of print, and have been too unusual in format to be considered for purchase by traditional libraries, that we should be grateful to discover such an excellent sense given here of so many pieces.

The primer begins with biographical notes, a section which is complemented later by a full bibliography. The first part proper is devoted to the garden and temple at Stonypath, with many excellent photographs of perspectives and features. The second section of this part "argues" that Finlay's experimental art "in fact constitutes a thorough examination of the basis of literacy (both artistic and literary) in the contemporary world", while the third section is a convincing argument in poem-objects that Finlay's basic ethical and aesthetic positions arise from a single neo-classical stance. His art is a commentary on and a challenge to the softer conformities and compromises of our liberal-democratic culture.

In the second part of the book, Abrioux's illustrated essay explores Finlay's poetic through various themes and ideas. He develops the theme of "aura" interestingly, if not wholly persuasively. From time to time, his prose is slightly overloaded with the jargon of semiology, but usually his insights do reveal new connections and depths of meaning. After reading this beautifully assembled book it is possible for us to understand how Finlay's quarrels with bureaucracy can be related to his deep love of fishing-boats and good design everywhere, and why he feels such strong attraction to the most sinister new forms of Apollo's weapons.

## Order from confusion sprung

Ruth Isabel Ross

MARINA SCHIZIN  
*Visions of Paradise: Themes and variations on the garden*  
210pp, with 280 colour photographs. Thames and Hudson. £27.50.  
050073229

*Visions of Paradise* is unashamedly a coffee-table book. The magnificent coloured photographs dominate; the text takes second place. Much ground is covered but no section is examined in great depth. The book is heavy; for perfect comfort one should read it on a lectern. Most knowledgeable gardeners like books on one theme only, say Larger Rhododendrons or Courtyard Gardens in Spain. As *Visions of Paradise* has ten themes it will appeal more to those whose interest in gardening is awakening. Marina Schizin, the photographer, and Susan Littlefield, her co-author, have tackled boldly subjects like cottage,

berth and kitchen gardens as well as, bravely, the more sophisticated ones of designed landscapes and perennial borders. There are sections on Italian, French and English gardens. Both of the authors work mostly in the United States.

Chaotic cottage gardens abound at the beginning of the book, and the authors illustrate how this chaos evolved into the disciplined but prolific planting of Gertrude Jekyll, Lawrence Johnston and Vita Sackville-West. There are photographs of Hestercombe, many more of Hidcote Manor and some of Sissinghurst. It is interesting to find several views of Monet's beautiful, flower-crammed garden at Giverny as examples of cottage style: two of these are especially effective, summer and autumn photographs of the same rose trellis, a wide one over a double nasturtium border. Monet's Clos Normand, like Sissinghurst, is a highly developed form of cottage garden, severely regulated for all its exuberance.

Italian gardens in this book are full of atmosphere, graceful but dilapidated stonework, water and fountains, box hedges. The excep-

tion, unmellowed by time, is the Fountain of Diana in the palace garden at Caserta; though accomplished it looks vulgar. Apart from the ornamental parterre at Villandry, nearly a joke, the French section is devoted almost entirely to André le Nôtre's grand gardens. Courcaines, Versailles, Sceaux and Vaux-le-Vicomte are shown in all their splendour. The views are most successful when the hard lines of this garden form are softened by a slight mist. The garish bedding at St Cloud Jars. The North American gardens shown here will be of interest to British readers, especially the Huntington Desert Garden in California, full of massed cacti and aloes, fascinating because so unfamiliar and so impossible to grow on any scale in our climate. There is a two-page photograph of the distinguished Washington garden, Dumbarton Oaks, but disappointingly none of the enchanting pebble garden there. Knot and herb gardens are a minority cult in the United States and some of these are shown.

There are some surprises. Why have the authors put hennepine, a poisonous plant, at the front of the herb section? Should so many roses at the Roseraie de l'Hay look the same red colour? And why are photographs of a Swiss and a French garden added awkwardly to the English section?

It is tempting to browse lazily through the illustration of most coffee-table books, leaving the texts for a day that never comes. It would be a pity to do this with *Visions of Paradise*. The text is competent, well-expressed and shows a lively enthusiasm for garden history.

### God

Next week's *TLS* will concentrate on the idea of God, and how it impinges on a wide range of human activity and thought, including physics, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and literature. Contributors include R. D. Laing, Brian Pippard, Roger Scruton, Leszek Kolakowski, Raymond Firth and Donald Davis.

In the same issue (May 23) George Steiner appraises Tom Paulin's controversial *Faber Book of Political Verse*.

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*A Bibliography of British Sporting Artists by North M. Tiley (192pp. Sotheby's and British Sporting Art Trust, 60 Tate Gallery, London, SW1P 4HQ. £18.75) has recently been published.*